

CHRIS SCHWARZ'S

HAND TOOL REVIVALISM...

Issue 298

...New & Old World meet at David Savage's Rowden Workshop



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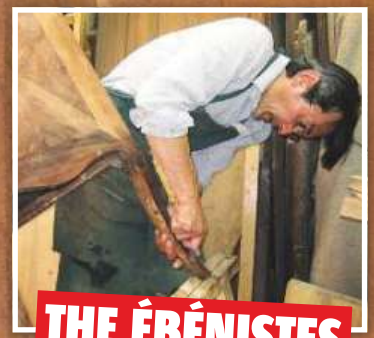
- Solutions: Craig Thibodeau shares his marquetry secrets
- Around the House: Phil Davy tackles a tricky commission
- Home Truths: Edward Hopkins talks log sheds



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Welcome

Hello! I want to take this opportunity to urge all young woodworkers reading this to fast track to **page 39**, and if you haven't already, apply to be in with a chance of winning the fantastic prize being given away by David Savage. The competition is drawing to a close and a plethora of amazing prizes are sitting there, just waiting to be grabbed. So, please, if you **ARE** a young woodworker, or indeed know someone who is, then get them to apply! This prize could change someone's life and shape the future of woodworking, so no pressure!

So, what's inside *GW298*? Well, I had the pleasure of speaking to a prestigious furniture maker this month, Craig Thibodeau, **p54**, whose pieces feature the most exquisite marquetry designs. In fact, I loved them so much that I begged Craig to share his trade secrets with us, **p24**. We also talk restoration and the signs to look out for, **p28**, before Michael Huntley demystifies surface coatings, **p32**.

Our first project is a simple but effective coffee table, **p36**, followed by a lovingly-made high-chair, **p58**, before Les Thorne squares up with an American cherry bowl blank, **p80**. In 'Home Truths', **p41**, Edward Hopkins talks sheds, but not before we bring you a bit of hand tool revivalism as Dave Roberts reports from David Savage's Rowden Workshop, **p48**. Next, Phil Davy tackles an awkward display shelving commission, **p73**, and Barrie Scott tells us more about the art of preserving French antique woodwork, **p62**.

And last but not least, Andy King puts the latest kit through its pages, including Triton's T12OT oscillating multi-tool, **p15**, and if you're looking for a powerful planer, then why not take a look at the Milwaukee M18 BP, **p20**? Enjoy!

Tegan Foley, Editor



Tegan Foley
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Consultant Editor



Phil Davy
Consultant Editor

We endeavour to ensure all techniques shown in Good Woodworking are safe, but take no responsibility for readers' actions. Take care when woodworking and always use guards, goggles, masks, hold-down devices and ear protection, and above all, plenty of common sense. Do remember to enjoy yourself, though.

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Good Woodworking

November 2015

Contents

Tools • Projects • Techniques • Advice



On the cover

54 Custom-made luxury

Furniture maker Craig Thibodeau shares his trade secrets with us and divulges the perfect recipe for fusing Asian, Art Deco and Arts & Crafts styles

Chris Schwarz's hand tool revivalism 48

Dave Roberts recently visited David Savage's Rowden Workshop where he met hand tool aficionado Chris Schwarz. Find out what happens when a Yankee enters King Arthur's court

What finish? 32

In his 'Woodwork Foundations' series, Michael Huntley demystifies the myths surrounding surface finishes



Student project

Projects

Maximum impact 36

Sean Healy made this simply-designed table to demonstrate his new joint-making skills

Somewhere to sit 58

Tony 'Bodger' Scott makes a high-chair for his grand-daughter

Squaring up 80

Les Thorne takes a square blank of cherry and turns it into an attractive winged bowl – a great project for testing your turning skills

Techniques

Marquetry master 24

Want to learn some coveted marquetry trade secrets from a pro? Fine furniture maker and marquetry guru Craig Thibodeau tells all here

Restorer turns detective 28

Restorer Stephen Simmons searches for the clues that help to date a piece of furniture

Protecting your projects 32

Michael Huntley demystifies surface finishing myths and offers up some expert tips

People & places

Centrefold 46

We have another Wood Awards shortlist nominee for you – this month in the shape of a wonderful Fishing Hut

A Yankee in King Arthur's court? 48

New World and Old World met when Chris Schwarz brought his hand tool revivalism to David Savage's Rowden Workshop

Shedding the load 41

Edward Hopkins talks log sheds, woodburning stoves and workshop cladding

Marquetry & furniture fusion 54

Tegan Foley finds out more about award-winning furniture maker Craig Thibodeau

The Ébénistes 62

Barrie Scott visits the workshop of French cabinetmakers Vladimir and Isabelle Souchko

Your favourites

News 8

Courses 12

Letters & makers 68

Around the House 73

Next month 89

Michael's Musings 90

Good Woodworking

Andy King tests...

Triton T120T oscillating tool	15
Charnwood W325 mortiser	16
Arbortech TurboShaft	18
Milwaukee M18 BP 18V planer	20



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Good Woodworking
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Go to
page 64



DISPLAY SHELVES

A tricky commission

Phil Davy tackles some challenging shelving 73



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IN THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR

David Savage's Rowden Workshop welcomes guest tutor Chris Schwarz 48



HIGH QUALITY CUTTING

Small but powerful
Andy King looks at Triton's latest multi-tool 15



MAGNIFICENT MARQUETRY

Craig Thibodeau
Asian, Art Deco and Art & Crafts-inspired furniture 54



SQUARING UP

Winged bowl
Make this attractive square bowl with Les Thorne 80

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Good Woodworking News

from the bench

Comment, insight, views and news of woodworkers from around the globe

Original. Again

Now in its fifth decade, the Triton TWX7 Workcentre has been radically redesigned and updated for a new generation of woodworkers. In a break with tradition, the TWX7 has moved away from an all-steel construction to the latest lightweight, but robust, extruded aluminium frame to support innovative low-friction work surfaces.

The basic configuration is a versatile woodworking station capable of supporting a 150kg load at the ideal working height of 900mm. A built-in mains isolated switch connector means power tools can be used with the knee-off stop button function. Sliding extensions support wide or long loads, and the frame has an ultra-low friction, textured surface so the workpiece can respond to even the lightest touch.

Switch-out modules

Fast switch-out modules transform the TWX7 between working modes. Modules are easy to fit, align perfectly with the frame, and can be fine-tuned for accuracy with simple-to-use levelling pins. Dual T-track rails run the length of the chassis for attaching accessories for use in any mode. Simply slide two locking latches and the clamping table can be removed, or fold the supporting legs beneath the table and you can wheel the entire Workcentre with modules attached.

Tool of many trades

The reduction in weight, the addition of rugged transit wheels and an easy folding frame mean that the TWX7 is not just a tool for the enthusiast woodworker, but it is also a highly capable and mobile multi-purpose workshop tool for professional site use. Precision,



accuracy and high mobility are assured, making the TWX7 Workcentre ideally suited for trades such as kitchen or shop fitting and other finishing trades where on-site access to workshop facilities and accuracy ensures the highest quality results.

An Australian classic

Available accessories include Router Module, Contractor Saw Module, Project Saw Module, Side Support and Outfeed Supports, Rugged Transit Kit and Protractor Assembly, all of which help to adapt the Workcentre for any type of job.

This latest incarnation of the Australian classic takes a giant leap forward in terms of materials, technology, operational safety and accurate refined design, losing nothing from the heritage of innovation and engineered precision that made its predecessors so admired and respected worldwide. The Triton TWX7 Workcentre is truly original. Again. Available from www.toolstream.com.

Record Power DML320 variable speed lathe



Are you in the market for a new lathe with a great price tag and lots of power? If so, Record Power's DML320 cast-iron electronic variable-speed lathe is the one for you. It boasts a powerful 1hp motor, 305mm swing over the bed and an impressive 508mm between centres. The spindle thread is the popular M33 x 3.5 and the tailstock is No.2 Morse taper, with a wide range of accessories available to fit.

You can expect to find a solid cast-iron bed, tailstock and headstock, which help to offer superb stability, even when turning larger items. The high quality electronic variable speed function gives smooth and responsive speed change at the turn of a dial and also gives a highly accurate digital speed readout. The DML320 is also capable of reverse turning and at under £500 with an industry-leading five-year guarantee, this is the perfect opportunity to purchase a high quality variable-speed lathe at an unbeatable price. See www.recordpower.co.uk.



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irwin.co.uk



Edgebanding on the go

Axminster Tools & Machinery is now selling two new portable edgebanders from Le-Matic: the BR500 and BR300. These machines can be used for applying veneers to straight or curved panel edges in PVC, ABS, laminated and solid woods. Both have many patented features not found on other portable edgebanders.

Le-Matic BR500 edgebander

This advanced model, priced at £947.95, is very simple to use.

The machine has a number of ergonomic and intuitive controls, including two rubber grips for precise control and a metal support plate designed to rest on the workpiece, which allows for strain-free use. It boasts a feeder on/off switch, a measured guide in increments of 1mm, a glue pot handle with two positions in case of workpiece interference, and an easy-to-reach knob regulates the flow of glue amount resulting in a mess-free, consistent result. The digital temperature control system has two modes: one with a range from 80°-155°C and the other with a range of 120°-200°C. This allows a huge range of specialist glues to be used for many applications. A variable speed range of 2-6m/min gives an edge to the control of this machine in difficult situations.



Le-Matic BR300 edgebander

Priced at £815.95, the BR300 is easy and straightforward to use with many features similar to the BR500. The main differences lie in the temperature control, which is a simple twist dial providing accurate control over the glue application and giving a temperature range of 120°C-200°C ±1°C. The motor runs at a fixed feed speed of 4.0m/min.

Both models are ideal for on-site work or integration into a woodworking workshop. These machines have everything that the small- or medium-scale furniture producer would require to get started, including the TK65 dual end cutter and a sample glue pack. Both are backed by a two-year warranty. See www.axminster.co.uk.

Axminster comes to Wales

Axminster Tools & Machinery will open its eighth store this November in the Cardiff area. Situated at Valegate Retail Park on Copthorne Way (CF5 6EH) to the west of Cardiff city centre, the new store will boast 12,000sq.ft. of retail space. The Cardiff store will be open seven days a week, including bank holidays.

The new store will also display an impressive range of industrial machinery including various models from Axminster's own Industrial Series.



Axminster's North Shields store, which opened in March this year

One aspect that will differ from all the other Axminster stores is that some signage will be in both English and Welsh.

For more info, see www.axminster.co.uk.



Adjustable height workstation

This heavy-duty adjustable height workstation features a table base with a hydraulically assisted hand crank that can adjust the table height between 673mm and 1,066mm. As a result, this allows users to work at their most comfortable height, and even move from sitting to standing.

Working at the proper height can make a significant difference where comfort and safety are concerned and can also allow greater comfort and better work performance during prolonged periods.

This handy workstation supports up to 500lb of weight, including the table top the user adds as their work surface. The cantilevered, U-shaped frame design allows users plenty of leg room when working in the seated position. When using the hand crank to adjust the height, five revolutions alters the height by approximately 25mm. Casters can be added to the base to make the workstation mobile. Priced at approximately £526 and available from www.rockler.com.

DMT D8C Dia-Sharp coarse diamond case

This 45 micron is a great intermediate stone for tidying up nicked edges and its precision-flatness makes it ideal for flattening waterstones.



It measures in at 203 x 76 x 10mm, which means it is wide enough to accommodate all conventional plane irons.

For lubrication, Workshop Heaven recommend water treated with Shield Technology HoneRite Gold, which prevents water from causing rust, in turn protecting both your diamond stone and the tool. Like all diamond stones, this one shouldn't be used on non-ferrous metals and needs to be kept clean – a nail brush and washing up liquid works well. Priced at £65 – see www.workshopheaven.com.

Shield Technology HoneRite Gold honing fluid

Perfect for use when lubricating diamond stones, this ultra low viscosity honing fluid has been developed for use with oilstones, although it also makes a very clean alternative to camellia oil for Scary Sharpening.

As well as lubricating it provides active corrosion protection to your tools and keeps the stones cutting freely. It can also be used to clean up and rejuvenate old clogged stones and can be wiped onto tools before putting them away to protect them against corrosion. Priced at £15.50 for a 250ml bottle; also available from www.workshopheaven.com.



National Tradesmen Day July winner announced

IRWIN Tools recently announced July's finalist for this year's National Tradesmen Day competition, which was Thomas Taylor. Thomas moved from his native Dublin to Ysbyty Ystwyth in mid Wales 26 years ago. He started his career in construction through various labouring apprenticeships and a year later, he had set up on his own to become



Thomas Taylor, July's finalist for this year's National Tradesmen Day competition

a sole trader. 20 years on and inspired by his surroundings, Thomas now focuses on conservation projects.

He has recently completed work on the award winning Dyfi Osprey Project observatory, a three-story structure constructed using only hand tools and local timbers. He was responsible for the entire design and build of the project and was committed to sourcing labour and materials from the local area. Thomas often invites volunteers from all walks of life

to join his teams, bringing the community together and helping those in need learn new skills and gain a personal sense of achievement. As an active member of the community, he was nominated for his hard work and dedication to environmental preservation. Congratulations from us and we'll bring you more winners as they are announced.



Jae-Hyo Lee with one of his discarded wood sculptures



Lounge chair made using large pine cone cross sections

From firewood to sculpture

We couldn't help but feature these stunning sculptures made from discarded wood, which are lovingly made by South Korean artist Jae-Hyo Lee. This master of manipulation takes unwanted pieces of wood and turns them into three-dimensional sculptural pieces that are both elegant and functional.

In terms of the process he uses, Jae-Hyo Lee assembles various chunks of wood, then burns them before carefully polishing them to create visual contrast and a smooth surface.

As he explains: "I want to express the wood's natural characteristics without adding my intentions. I like to make the most of the material's inherent feeling. Little things add up to transmit a stronger power, greater energy; that is why I have quite a lot of large pieces."

Having worked with other mediums in the past, Jae-Hyo Lee made the decision to turn his hand to more natural materials and the result is these wonderful sculptures, many of which are now displayed in hotels and other busy locations. The beauty of his work is that unlike pieces in galleries, Jae-Hyo Lee's work is surrounded by people every day.



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Autumn is here – a great excuse to hone those woodworking skills ready for 2016

October

23–25 Fine furniture technique – a steam-bent and inlaid tray

23–25 Woodturning – bowls with texture

West Dean College

West Dean, near Chichester

West Sussex PO18 0QZ

Tel: 01243 811 301

Web: www.westdean.org.uk

16 Introduction to Leigh jigs

(Sittingbourne)

19–20 Natural-edge bowls (Axminster)

20 Scrollsaw course (Sittingbourne)

22–23 & 31–1 Nutcracker wooden figures

(Axminster)

26–27 Beginners woodturning (Axminster)

26–27 Wood machining (Axminster)

27 Spindle moulding (Sittingbourne)

29–30 Christmas decorations & gifts

(2 days) (Axminster)

Axminster Tools & Machinery

Unit 10 Weycroft Avenue

Axminster

Devon EX13 5PH

Tel: 0800 975 1905

Web: www.axminster.co.uk

November

1 An introduction to chair making

Weald & Downland Open Air Museum

Singleton, Chichester

West Sussex PO18 0EU

Tel: 01243 811 363

Web: www.wealddown.co.uk

2–3 & 19–20 Beginners woodturning

(Axminster)

5 Introduction to Leigh jigs (Sittingbourne)

5 & 24 Pen making (Axminster &

Sittingbourne)

9 Kitchen/door jointing (Axminster)

10–11 Beginners routing (Sittingbourne)

12 Fine-tuning hand planes (Axminster)

13 Sharpening (Axminster)

13 Sharpening with Tormek hand tools

(Sittingbourne)

19–20 Woodcarving with Paul Gardner

(Axminster)

23–24 Machining for restoration

(Axminster)

24 Christmas decorations & gifts (1 day)

(Axminster)

25 & 26 Turned boxes (advanced)

(Axminster)

26 Turning a pestle & mortar for the

kitchen (Axminster)

28 Spindle moulding (Sittingbourne)

30–4 Windsor chair (Axminster)

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Eclipse-inspired wall art



'Corona' by David Tragen

Furniture maker David Tragen's latest commission was for his 'Corona' lit wall art, a limited edition piece inspired by this year's solar eclipse. Giving off a gentle light, the piece is made in wenge and oak and measures 790 × 790 × 105mm. In David's words, "Corona captures that magical moment when only the glowing ring of the sun can be seen, as the moon blocks out direct sunlight."

This mesmerising piece of illuminated wall art is designed to be used in conjunction with other gentle ambient lighting to provide a calming mood to a room. The sunburst effect is created by 16 leaves of bleached and stained wenge while the central circular piece in ebonised oak acts as a focal point for the eye.

To see more of David's work, visit his website: www.davidtragen.co.uk.

Awarding the furniture makers of the future

Part of The Furniture Makers' Company's mission is to educate the next generation to create a skilled and talented workforce for the future. This begins with schoolchildren and working directly with schools, the Company is able to build confidence in young people and inspire them to consider a career in this exciting and rewarding industry.

In 2013 a group of their members led by Past Master Jonathan Hindle and the V&A published *Modern British Furniture: Design Since 1945* by design historian Lesley Jackson. Beautifully illustrated throughout, the book is the definitive work on this period of furnishing design. In 2014, a pilot scheme was launched with sponsorship from BrightHouse and B&Q to give 450 secondary schools a copy of the book as a prize for their best GCSE or A Level Design & Technology student, as nominated by their teacher.

The pilot was so successful that this year another 900 books were sent out to schools throughout the UK to reward young talent and inspire their future learning and career choices.

Charles Vernon, Chairman of the Training & Education Committee at The Furniture Makers' Company, said: "As the furnishing industry's charity we want to encourage new talent to enter our industry and have put in place an extensive education programme to help create a powerful workforce for the future. Our Schools Design Prize is one of several education initiatives we run and we hope that many of the schoolchildren involved are inspired to go into further education or training within the furnishing industry."

Toolstation opens 200th branch

Toolstation, one of the fastest growing suppliers of tools, accessories and building supplies to the trade and home improvement industry, has opened its 200th branch since its launch in 2003.

The new branch, based in Newton Abbot, Devon, extends the company's presence in the South West.

With each branch opening creating seven new jobs, Toolstation has now employed over 1,400 people in its branches alone, with over 500 in its head office and distribution centres. The roll out of new branches is set to continue to reach the 210 target by the end of 2015, with further expansion planned for 2016.

Craig Higgins, Retail Director at Toolstation, commented: "The opening of our 200th branch is a real landmark in what has proved to be a year of strong growth and it is great to see our network expanding across the UK. Our ultimate aim is to provide a great multi-channel customer experience at conveniently located branches, online or on our mobile website.

The company is continually on the lookout for new sites to hit its growth goals and finding the right location is crucial to successfully opening 210 branches by the end of this year.



The men behind Toolstation's new Newton Abbot branch

OFFCUTS

MADE LONDON's design and craft fair will be taking place from 22-25 October at One Marylebone, a Sir John Soane Church in central London. Here you can see the work of the very best and most original makers in this country and beyond, who will be selling their highest quality designs direct to the public. See www.madelondon.org.



Surrey Association of Woodturners will be holding their open day on 25 October. Expect to see turning demos by GW author Les Thorne

and Sue Harker. Members of the public, woodturners and all those interested in wood are welcome. To find out more, see www.sawoodturners.org.



Peebles is the place to be as the Tree-mendous Wood Market celebrates its 10th Anniversary at the Community Centre and Tweed Green on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 October. See www.forest-festival.com to find out more.

Good Woodworking Free Reader Ads

Machinery

Coronet lathe with 3ft bed, Henry Taylor Master chuck and woodturning chisels. Any reasonable offers considered ☎ **01543 279 310 (Staffs)**

Kity K5 Combination machine. Saw, planer/thicknesser, spindle moulder. Old machine in really good condition with a host of extras; £300 ☎ **07707 242 948 (Oxon)**

Makita MLT100 sawbench, on moveable trolley, little used; £150 ☎ **01992 627 927 (Waltham Cross)**

Poolewood lathe. Variable speed, 1,219mm between centres, twin bed bars. 1hp reversible motor; £325 ☎ **01664 812 520 (Melton Mowbray)**

Hand tools

Stanley ratchet brace, 8in swing two-jaw model in excellent condition, with a selection of auger and flat bits; £35 ☎ **01189 712 472 (West Berkshire)**

Stanley Bailey No.4 smoothing plane in excellent condition with wooden handles; £20 ☎ **01189 712 472 (West Berkshire)**

Power tools

Bosch GOF 2000CE Professional router. Brand new with accessories, unused; £250 ☎ **01629 814 572 (Derbyshire)**

Black & Decker sander, ½-sheet orbital finishing model, 135W, in good boxed condition with dust extraction kit; £10 ☎ **01189 712 472 (West Berkshire)**

Miscellaneous

15-20 pieces of hardwoods, approximately 3ft long, of various types, widths and thicknesses; make me an offer ☎ **01619 762 525 (Cheshire)**

Tormek SVH-320 jig for grinding planer blades; £80 ☎ **01793 771 898 (Swindon)**



Brand new pine wall wine display held with two large screws; £10 ☎ **Matthew - 07858 728 376**

Wanted

Spiers/Norris/Henley planes wanted by private collector; any quote beaten. Call Ron Lowe on ☎ **01530 834 581 (Leics)**

Woodworking hand tools, especially old wood and metal planes, wanted by collector. Write to Mr B Jackson, 10 Ayr Close, Stamford PE9 2TS or call ☎ **01780 751 768 (Lincs)**

Woodworking tools: planes by Norris, Spiers, Mathieson, Preston, Slater, etc., brass braces, interesting rules and spirit levels; top prices paid, auction prices beaten ☎ **01647 432 841 (Devon)**

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Andy King, Technical Editor
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High quality sanding & cutting

The Triton T120T oscillating tool offers superb value if you're in the market for a multi-tool



▲ There's plenty of power for such a small unit – this 32mm cut in beech was easy



▲ Standard cutters need to have the retaining screw fully removed to swap them



▲ The open-ended design cutters can slide in without removing the screw

Hot on the heels of the Triton angle drill reviewed in issue 297, the T120T oscillating tool follows along similar parameters with the bits you don't see of high standard. With a 1.5Ah battery as standard, even with two supplied, the run time longevity is always going to be an issue as these tools do drain cells quickly when under load. If run time is a major factor, you may well have to look at a higher capacity but Triton do have 3Ah batteries in this 12V platform to attain those additional minutes of work.

However, charge time increases accordingly, with the 1.5Ah requiring one hour for full capacity and the 3Ah needing two hours. Despite the long charge time, you can get 80% of the power into the 1.5Ah battery in around 30 minutes if you need to get a boost.

On the plus side, with the lower voltage

motor, the body is far slimmer than many of the 18V machines, allowing for finer control.

The T120T sits at the entry level for features, making variable speed its main draw. However, with no variable speed trigger, the multi-tool's slide switch engages the power so speed has to be controlled with the dial. This isn't problematic: it's easy to adjust on the fly if needed, and with the top mounted power switch, it's equally easy to use in either hand.

Ease of use

Swapping between the sanding head and various cutters is done with a hex wrench, the retaining flange having four raised studs to engage the various accessories and is compatible with the common cutter designs from most manufacturers. The hex screw retention method makes swaps a little long-

winded compared to the quick-release options out there, but the price this tool sells for dictates the inclusion of such features and unless you constantly swap and change accessories, it's no real hardship to do so.

The tool comes with a number of accessories, which makes it excellent value. These all have the DeWalt open design so you can slide them onto the flange without having to fully remove the hex screw, which speeds up swaps considerably.

Despite the bargain price, the tool doesn't slouch and the lower voltage doesn't let it down either.

Conclusion

The T120T does buzz in the hand a little more than the pro-rated models, but vibration is the nature of the beast with such tools; and in the cut mode, once engaged on the workpiece, the vibration is dampened, but without detriment to the cutting or sanding action.

For less than £100, the kit is superb value and if you don't need to use one very often, it's well worth the money. **GW**

Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ Good range of accessories; two batteries; slim design

- Hex key tool change; no variable speed trigger; battery charge time

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £95 (inc VAT)

Speeds: 6,000-16,000 oscillations per minute

Oscillation arc range: 2.8°

Battery: 1.5Ah x 2

Charge time: 1 hour

Web: www.triton.com/en

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Heavy-duty joinery mastered

The cast-iron construction of the Charnwood W325 mortiser means it's up to the challenge of heavy-duty joinery, but it's equally at home on the finer side of things

The W325 mortiser from Charnwood



► In use the mortiser works flawlessly and has plenty of power



Owning a mortiser immediately ups your game when you want to make more complex or stronger work, with twofold benefits of speed and accuracy. Even the basic entry level ones are a massive step up, but for real speed you need to look towards the 'X, Y' traversing bed machines.

Charnwood's W325 mortiser is a trade-rated machine but at a price that's affordable for anyone who wants a solidly built piece of kit with capacities that will cover the smallest furniture work through to heavy joinery, taking chisels from 6-25mm.

You can work 205mm stock when fitted with a 12mm chisel, making it suitable for door construction where muntins between bottom and middle rails are needed with through mortises achievable by flipping the timber.

The plunge handle is plenty long enough to get good leverage when fitted with bigger chisels and its spring-loaded toothed intersection with the mortiser head allows it to be repositioned to suit the workpiece.

Chisel swaps are much of a muckness on any mortiser, and no change here, as a hex screw retains the chisel, while a standard three-jaw chuck holds the drill bit, with the chuck being accessed through side flaps on the mortiser head.



▲ The large plunge handle is easily repositioned to suit the work



▲ You need a hex wrench to secure the chisel

Charnwood W325 mortiser



▲ The rack and pinion slide on the plunge head keeps things running smoothly



▲ The front to back adjustment is altered with this large wheel



▲ A push in clamp, locked with the cam lever secures work firmly



▲ This quick-release clamp is very fast to adjust



▲ The resulting mortises are clean and square

Heavy-duty

Cast-iron plays a big part in the construction of the mortiser; the beds and slides are all cast with rack and pinion adjustments for head travel and bed adjustments, each having gib strips to snug up and adjust as the machine wears in, all helping to make it a very robust and durable machine.

I found the adjuster wheels for setting the front to back mortise position and lateral

movement very useful, making it easy to position the work accurately, although I would prefer a larger lateral wheel that allows a steering wheel style operation rather than using the built-in handle of this particular wheel.

There are also a series of Bristol lever secured collars that can be set up against a stop to restrict the position and lateral travel for setting repeat mortises – in theory allowing you to work with minimal marking out. However, I found you can achieve a fair amount of pressure with the lateral adjuster wheel and if you rely on them without any setting out marks, then they start to nudge the stops or deflect, which could result in inaccuracy, so I prefer to mark out in the traditional manner and sneak up on the setting out marks.

Secure working

A further stop system is incorporated to limit the plunge depth for blind mortising and haunch work. Again, there's a lot of pressure generated against any stop that's set but this is perhaps not so problematic if it does move. Personally, I tend to file a mark on the chisel for setting specific depths, such as haunches, as I find visual marks more beneficial.

Securing the work is well catered for with two substantial tool-free adjustable hold down clamps that secure the work to the bed with a cam action for fast setting.

Holding the work against the fence is equally quick. A sliding shoe, set at an angle to apply

downwards as well as forwards pressure, is simply slid up to the work and as the lock lever engages, the shoe is forced forwards to nip the work securely.

Conclusion

With its solid build and easy adjustments the W325 hits the spot for heavy-duty joinery especially, but is equally at home on the finer side of things.

Weighing in at 120kg, it's ideally suited for a larger workshop that can afford the machine its own space without having to move it to gain space as needed.

That said, with mortisers usually sited against a wall, it doesn't need a huge amount of space if you are a little restricted – it's just a bit of a lump to shift around! [GTV](#)

Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ Solid build; big capacities; fully adjustable; useful storage base cabinet

– The collars may be prone to moving if you use them

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £599 (inc VAT)

Motor: 750W

Motor speed: 1,400rpm

Max timber height with 12mm chisel: 205mm

Max clamping width: 145mm

Chisel capacities: 6-25mm

Chisel collar: 20mm

Web: www.charnwood.net



▲ Timber up to 205mm deep will fit below a 13mm chisel

Fine detailing with ease

If you're looking to add fine detail to flat stock, then this is the tool for you

This new bit of kit adds another string to the Arbortech's bow, allowing plunging cuts and finer detailing.

Designed to fit onto a standard mini grinder of 100mm or 114mm diameter capacity, the TurboShaft screws directly onto the grinder arbor with flats on the shaft, allowing a spanner to nip it up or remove it but a suitable spanner isn't supplied with the kit.

A hollow adaptor bolt is supplied to alter the thread diameter to 10mm, if you own a grinder that doesn't have the more common 14mm thread for a direct fit.

Easy working

The tungsten carbide cutters can be rotated as they dull to keep the edge fresh and sharp and there's a Torx wrench supplied for this purpose.

Working with the TurboShaft is really easy: the twin circular cutting tips project marginally beyond the 20mm diameter shaft, which

means the usual gyroscopic forces that can take effect with grinders fitted with wide discs is removed, so it's pretty controllable.

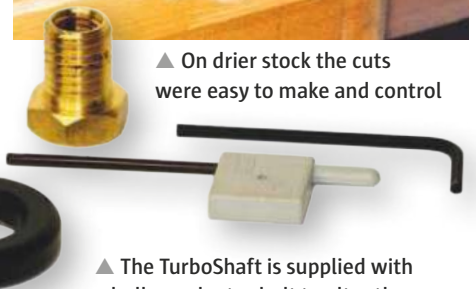
You need to ensure you use the side handle on your grinder for safe operation as you work but it's very easy to manoeuvre.

With the cutting action limited to the tip of the shaft the cut isn't fast, but it can be used in a planing action to cut a recess or as a plunge cut and if you need to restrict the cut to a specific depth, there's also a substantial depth collar supplied.

The minimal cutter projection allows the TurboShaft to run against an edge so you can achieve template copying as well as freehand and with a cutting depth of around 70mm, you aren't limited to working the surface of any stock either.



▲ On drier stock the cuts were easy to make and control



▲ The TurboShaft is supplied with a hollow adaptor bolt to alter the thread diameter to 10mm

Best on dry stock

Having a bit of a tinker on an old pine fence post, I found it a little laborious to get past the woolly fibres and into the drier stuff below but on doing so found the cut a lot easier and faster. Moving to a dry piece of flat stock, the performance was a marked improvement.

I found it easier and cleaner cutting to drag the TurboShaft back through the work for sculpting and defining cuts, while moving in small clockwise circular motions when planing with the tip gave me good control, but it's not the tool you would reach for to remove a lot of timber; it took a while to drag out a shallow recess that would have taken seconds with an Arbortech – detailing is it's forte.

Conclusion

I did find there was some vibration through to the grinder, but I only have a cheap DIY one so a better quality version should prove better here. Of course, as with any work that involves shaping and carving, the real art is in the initial design and seeing things in three dimensions before and as you progress removing the stock. The TurboShaft is a good addition for those who have such talent. **GW**

Good The Woodworking Verdict

- + Easy to control; good for finer detail and plunging work
- Cuts quite slowly; wet pine doesn't cut well

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £69.96 (inc VAT)

Cutting diameter: 20mm

Max plunge depth: 70mm

Web: www.axminster.co.uk



▲ This brass adaptor is supplied for altering the thread diameter



▲ The collar can be used to restrict the plunge depth of the tool



▲ The cutters are made from solid tungsten carbide for durability



▲ On softer, wet timber the TurboShaft struggled to cut

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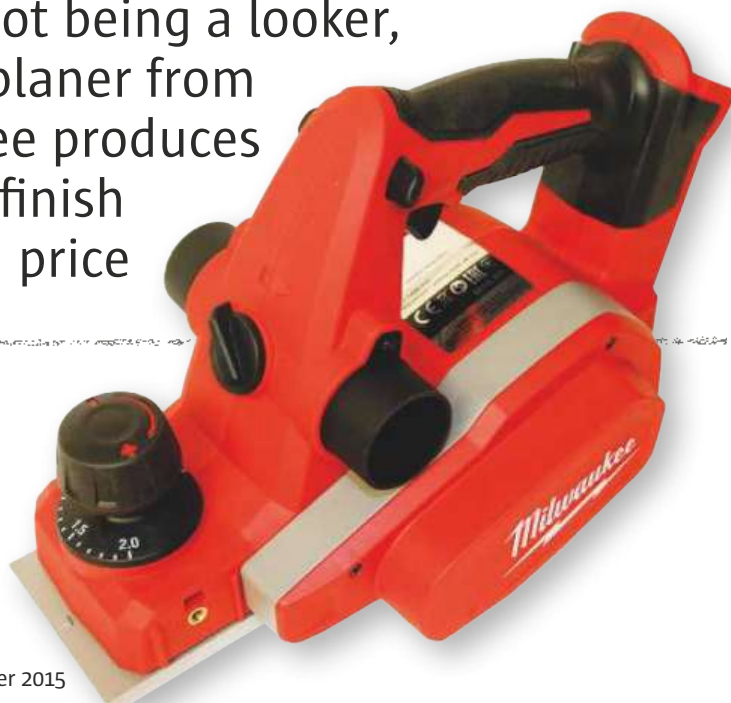


▲ Using the fence helps support the planer on edge work

Powerful under load

Despite not being a looker, this 18V planer from Milwaukee produces a superb finish at a good price

► The Milwaukee M18 BP 18V planer – a great body-only addition



While Milwaukee haven't opted for a 'Fuel', which is their signature range of brushless motor cordless tools, this new four-pole motored model puts Milwaukee back in the race for the chippies' hard-earned cash.

It's no looker; quite an angular and rudimentary design, but in truth there's very little you can introduce to a planer to enhance its design or capabilities as its role is simple, but this one is certainly effective.

The first thing that jumped out at me when I quickly scanned it over before a closer look was the cutterblock. It follows a similar design to the old square head blocks found on older, now illegal, static jointer machines. It means that as the block rotates, as the flats come around to the mouth aperture, it leaves a gap in excess of 12mm. I could easily get my finger in there, which is why the surfacer-type machines became illegal.

As the Milwaukee is hand-held, the planer

Milwaukee M18 BP 18V planer



▲ The supplied dust bag can fit to either side of the planer



▲ The side from which the shavings eject is controlled via this small dial



▲ The parking shoe can be locked in flush if not required



▲ The block looks similar to many out there



▲ The fence is a great addition and can tilt for angled work



▲ The dust outlet is easily overwhelmed when making wider cuts with the bag fitted

should be controlled with the hands above the danger area, so your digits should be well away from peril. Any reservations I had were addressed by the CE mark – it's fully compliant for use in the EU.

Dealing with shavings

What the square block design does give you is a machine that isn't easily overwhelmed by shavings gathering around the block; these are quickly moved up and away to the 40mm ejector port. There's a built in internal deflector that can be altered to fire shavings to either side of the tool by using the front mounted dial. There's a dust bag supplied with the machine, which is always a useful addition, and often an optional extra, especially when buying sans battery, but during my tests I found that it does suffer similar problems to some others: with new blades and working wider timber that gives big shavings, the dust outlet is too narrow to cope and quickly clogs.

Let the shavings eject to the floor and the planer trots along quite merrily so you need to decide whether to keep an eye on the bag or get the brush out!

The ideal scenario is an extractor and an adaptor is supplied to take a standard hose. This is designed with a lip to allow Milwaukee's own hose lock system to retain it, but it will work with a push fit hose as well.

Thick aluminium beds

The planer takes standard reversible carbide blades that self-set with blades easily swapped

with the supplied hex wrench. Depth adjustment is altered with the front adjuster to a maximum of 2mm per pass, indexing into 20 different positions for 1/20th millimetre adjustments, allowing finer fitting as needed.

Moving to the underside of the mortiser, the planer beds are thick aluminium with excellent milled faces for accuracy with the front shoe having a 'V' groove, which allows you to quickly knock corners off for basic chamfer work. The parking shoe is also a neat addition, as you can easily lock it in if you don't need it.

90° position

The planer also comes with a good fence that tilts, which allows more scope to replicate existing bevels and so forth. It works well set at its 90° position as a support when running along an edge; shooting in a door edge, for example, and with a marginal tilt will run the closing angles off quickly and accurately.

You need to check it for 90° due to its pressed steel construction, which isn't the most accurate, but is still incredibly useful.

It is of course designed for rebating work as well, sliding across the sole to set the width. A maximum depth of 10.7mm is achievable, which is a tad shy of what I would like if I was looking to fit a door over a water bar or rebating a pair of doors to fit a suitable rebated lock or latch, for example, but it does prove useful in other areas up to its maximum capacity.

Conclusion

The planer works very well indeed under load; I cleaned up a long piece of 50mm-thick maple and then took a few passes on its flat, taking cuts of 2mm on the 50mm edge and knocking back to around 0.7mm on the wider 75mm flat.

Both cuts overwhelmed the bag quickly but the planer itself powered on regardless. Removing the bag to let the shavings eject freely made for a glassy smooth finish and I was able to make passes as quick as a mains one without detriment to finish or power.

All in all, if you are on board with Milwaukee then it's a great body-only addition, and if you are looking for a new complete kit with batteries, it gets you into the rest of the Milwaukee range including the completely compatible 'Fuel' range of tools. Definitely worth a look. **GW**

Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ Superb finish; powerful under load; dust bag and fence supplied as standard

- Dust bag can clog quickly; the square block is scary!

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £442.80 with 2 × 4.0Ah batteries; £214.80 body-only (as reviewed)

Block speed: 14,000rpm

Block width: 82mm

Max cutting depth: 2mm

Max rebate depth: 10.7mm

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To find out more about Craig and his exquisite work, see our full profile on page 54

Marquetry master

Want to learn some coveted marquetry trade secrets from a pro? Fine furniture maker and marquetry guru **Craig Thibodeau** tells all here and shows us the techniques employed for some of his most well-executed pieces

For the past eight years I have been incorporating marquetry and parquetry imagery in the form of flowers, branches, animals and geometric patterns into some of my furniture.

Marquetry/parquetry is the craft of covering a structural carcass with veneer forming decorative patterns, designs or pictures. Materials associated with marquetry have included wood, ivory, bone, mother-of-pearl, brass and others. My marquetry furniture combines the structural geometry of a man-made object with the asymmetry of nature represented in flower and leaf patterns and motifs.

Traditional methods

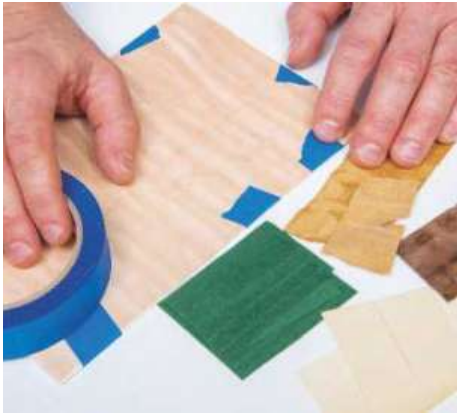
The majority of the marquetry veneer patterns in my work are cut in the traditional 18th-

century French Boulle method, also known as the packet cutting method. The Boulle method requires cutting all the elements of the design simultaneously with the background. Cutting is done on a chevalet de marqueterie, or marquetry donkey, which is of French design and is also from the 18th century. The Boulle method can also be executed using modern scrollsaws. Specific components are then shaded with hot sand to create the illusion of depth and shadows. The veneer work is then glued to the furniture carcass, using a combination of traditional hide glue and modern glues, including epoxy, urea formaldehyde and polyvinyl acetate.

Natural flow

Incorporating marquetry or parquetry images into a custom piece of furniture can add considerable time to the design and

construction process, but it allows the client to possess a piece that is truly unique. Each marquetry design is hand-drawn leaf-by-leaf and flower-by-flower to create imagery that flows naturally and is true to the artistic vision of the project being created. These marquetry designs typically begin with photos of the shapes and patterns of the flower and leaf design being created. The process then progresses into hand drawings that go through many revisions as the lines and shapes of the individual components of the design are finalised. These final drawings are the cutting template for the marquetry veneer packets and are used throughout the construction process to guide the design to its final finished shape. I see the addition of decorative marquetry as a doorway into unique and exciting visual forms and more expressive freedom.



▲ Pic.1 Once you have made a line drawing of your intended marquetry image and glued it down, tape the background veneer onto another piece of cardstock



▲ Pic.2 Make sure the small pieces of veneer you use are larger than the piece you're cutting – go for a rule of 25mm larger



▲ Pic.3 Using a scroll saw fitted with a 2/0 blade on a low setting, start with the outside pieces and cut each part one at a time



▲ Pic.4 After sifting through the small stack of parts, select the one you want to use in the final marquetry picture



▲ Pic.5 To add depth to the picture, sand shading can be used. Carefully dip the edges in the hot sand, one at a time



▲ Pic.6 To reintroduce moisture to the shaded veneer, dip your finger in a cup of water and apply to each piece of veneer

17 steps to perfect marquetry

Here I will go through the steps I take for creating a piece of marquetry on one of my items of furniture – in this case it is a dogwood flower

1 Start with a clear line drawing of your intended marquetry image and then proceed to spray glue the drawing onto a piece of cardstock.

2 Tape the background veneer onto another piece of cardstock using pieces of blue tape around the edges (Pic.1).

3 Begin cutting and taping small pieces of coloured veneer to the background in the exact location they will be on the final drawing.

4 The small pieces of veneer should be larger than the marquetry piece that will be cut. Typically I make mine 25mm larger all round than the piece they represent (Pic.2).

5 Once all the different veneer pieces are taped in place, tape the cardstock with the drawing on top of the background veneer assembly. Tape tightly all around the edges.

6 I use a DeWalt scroll saw with the speed set low and a 2/0 blade to cut my marquetry. Start with an outside piece and cut the parts out one at a time (Pic.3).

7 As each piece is cut, remove the small stack of parts and select the one to be used in the final marquetry picture (Pic.4).

8 Place the selected part on a copy of the marquetry drawing in the appropriate location.

9 Once all the pieces are cut, open the taped packet and carefully remove the background veneer.

10 Turn the background veneer glue side up and apply a layer of blue tape to the entire sheet of veneer.

11 Turn the background right side up and begin inserting the cut pieces in their locations until the image is fully assembled.

12 To add some depth to the marquetry picture; individual pieces may be sand shaded in a pan of hot sand.

13 Remove each piece to be shaded one at a time and carefully dip the edges in hot sand until the correct amount of burning has taken place (Pic.5).

14 Dip your fingers in a cup of water and apply them to the shaded veneer piece to reintroduce moisture to the veneer. Next, place the veneer back onto the background tape and weigh it down with a heavy board (Pic.6).

15 Once all the pieces are shaded and dry, apply a layer of blue tape across the entire show face of the marquetry picture.

16 Flip the veneer over and remove the blue tape from the back side.

17 You're now ready to glue the marquetry to the substrate of your choice.

Marquetry case studies

'Art Deco Puzzle Cabinet'

Size: 1,066mm wide × 457mm deep × 864mm high

Materials used: Etimoe, amboyna burl, curly sycamore, maple burl, ebony and various marquetry woods

Description: This piece was designed for a puzzle collector and incorporates several puzzles and hidden details in the construction. There is a 25-piece sliding tile puzzle with a marquetry picture of two birds on some flowering branches in the top. It is hidden by a sliding cover opened with a hidden magnetic key. Next to the puzzle is a secret compartment with a hinged lid that opens by pressing a small button hidden under one of the sliding puzzle pieces. The front doors have a series of 13 randomly placed sliding locks; holding them closed and sliding the correct locks allows each door to be opened with the magnetic key. "Overall this was a fun piece to build and I'm looking forward to building more like this in the future," says Craig.



Detail showing the sliding tile marquetry picture, with two birds and flowering branches

Art Deco table with Trompe L'oeil interior

Size: 965mm wide × 483mm wide × 762mm high

Materials used: Pau ferro, quilted maple, Macassar ebony and various marquetry woods

Description: This Art Deco table is Craig's first exploration into Trompe L'oeil marquetry imagery. The table commission itself began as a nice Art Deco style table without any of the extra details. To that base he added two pop out drink trays in maple and ebony with polished stainless steel inserts. Craig and his client then began discussing what to do with the interior space of the central column.

A variety of ideas were tossed about until the client settled on a Trompe L'oeil image hidden behind a secret door with a couple more secret areas hidden in the image.

They worked out a system of embedded magnets that would hold pieces in place but also allow them to be opened with a special magnetic key. The door is held closed by four magnets and there are additional magnets buried inside the hidden drawer and the outside face of the secret door. Craig decided that the special magnetic key should be hidden somewhere on the outside of the table so it could be accessed easily but not seen. The key itself has been veneered to match the surrounding wood and is spring-loaded, so a gentle push makes it pop out. It can then be used to open the main secret door and also to pull out the hidden drawer. The small door in the image leads to a small space with a polished floor and arched ceiling. The veneer for the walls and ceiling gradually change to darker colours as they go deeper into the cavity to increase the sense of depth.



The Trompe L'oeil marquetry imagery takes on a 3D effect

An eye for detail

Craig has perfected his technique for creating flower scenes in marquetry, as you can see here



Detail of Craig's buffet cabinet



These gladiolus flowers look almost lifelike



Craig's 'Gardenia Sideboard' is a triumph. It features gardenia flowers flowing from a central point in the top down the front panels



A tulip design from an Art Deco dining table

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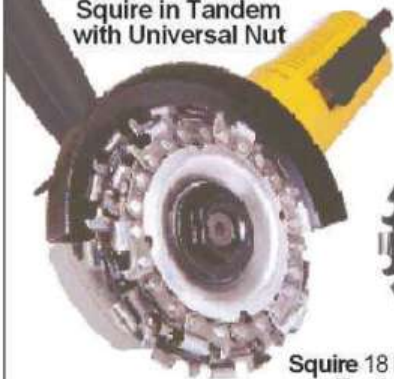
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Here are some 18th- and 19th-century chair braces. The former is unusual in that it's at the front rather than the back

Restorer turns detective

Restorer **Stephen Simmons** searches for the clues that help to date a piece of furniture

Why date your furniture? Well, it's obviously important to know both the style and standard of a piece so as to restore it authentically. But you will also want to avoid anachronisms. Putting baroque Queen Anne-style handles on a chest of drawers that was made later in the 18th century, for example, may ruin its classical proportions.

However, the dating process can be tricky, not least because there are replicas, revivals, reproductions and downright fakes. The human memory is also frail, which is something that you have to bear in mind when dealing with clients: a piece of furniture using plywood cannot possibly be a family heirloom dating from the mid-19th century!

When you don't have the aid of modern composites to guide you, though, and there's no maker's name or any other definite provenance attached to the piece, you can still date an item relatively accurately by carefully following the clues.

Detective work

The type and species of the timber will provide crucial evidence for your investigation. As a rule of thumb, for example, you can distinguish older mahogany by its weight and the darkness of its colour; mahogany became lighter in weight and colour through the 19th century, when African species were increasingly exploited (see *GW180*). Also, the use of American or black walnut

points towards the Victorian and Edwardian periods, when it was very popular and extensively used for good quality furniture, much of which still exists.

Veneer can also help in your enquiry. Generally speaking, the thicker it is, the older the piece. This is because veneers dating back to the 19th century didn't have the benefit of machine-cutting, and cutting veneers by hand led to dramatically varying thicknesses – the worst case I saw was a section less than 1ft long that ranged from paper-thin to 3mm.

The finish of a piece, which is frequently assumed to be important in dating, is actually not likely to be of much use: once the Victorians got the taste for French polish, for example, they stripped a good deal of earlier furniture to re-finish it with their fashionable new gloss. Besides, after 200 to 300 years (and sometimes as little as 50), most pieces are likely to be covered with such a cocktail of polishes and grime as to make the overall finish meaningless as a pointer.

Style is a far more accurate indicator. Legs, feet, pediments and chair backs, as well as handles and metalwork all undergo changes in their design, often over a relatively short space of time. This allows you to be quite 'forensic' in your detective work, especially if you study the line drawings in something like the *Lyle Official Antiques Review* to start developing your eye and building up your knowledge. Old copies of the *Review* are cheap and the drawings remain the same.

The devil in the detail

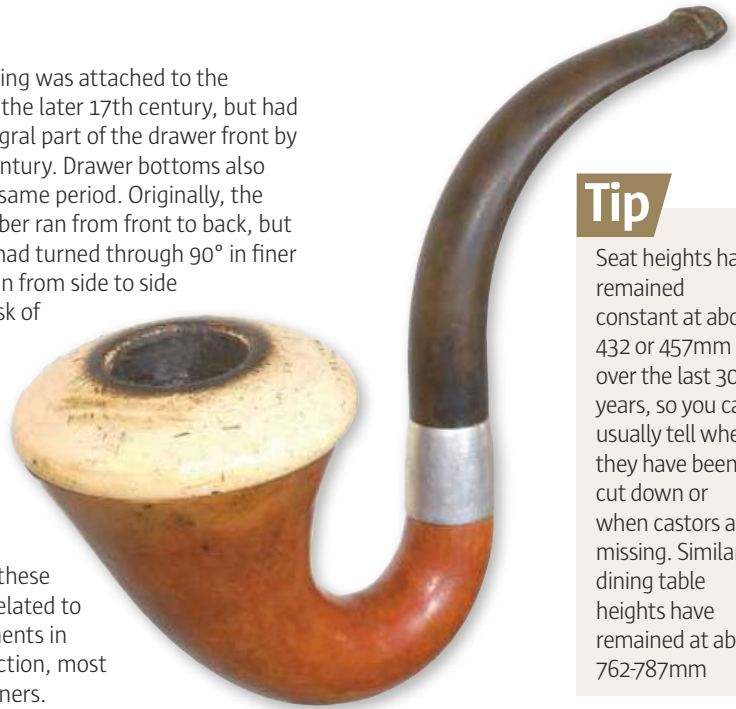
The most reliable evidence of a piece's age, however, probably comes from the methods employed in its construction, particularly when it comes to drawers and chairs.

For instance, when dealing with cock-beading (see GW173), I showed how

protective beading was attached to the cabinet itself in the later 17th century, but had become an integral part of the drawer front by the mid-18th century. Drawer bottoms also changed in the same period. Originally, the grain of the timber ran from front to back, but by the 1740s it had turned through 90° in finer furniture and ran from side to side to reduce the risk of splitting; in what's rather patronisingly referred to as 'country furniture', the evolution took longer. Both of these changes were related to other developments in drawer construction, most notably the runners.

Drawers existed as early as the 16th century, but were fairly crude at that point: the runners tended to bear on the bottom panel, and were often just nailed to the sides. This caused considerable wear, and in the 17th century attempts were made to reduce friction. Some drawers ran on a batten projecting from the inside of the cabinet and fitting into a rebate in the drawer side or lining, but the practice was not universal. Some of the small drawers in the prospects of fall-front bureaux continued to run on the bottom panel well into the next century.

The Restoration in 1660 saw an increase in the range and sophistication of furniture generally and the modern runner began to evolve, as shown in GW181. The bottom became rebated into the lining above the lower edge and an additional strip of wood was fitted into the angle



Tip

Seat heights have remained constant at about 432 or 457mm over the last 300 years, so you can usually tell when they have been cut down or when castors are missing. Similarly, dining table heights have remained at about 762-787mm

between the two, with animal glue and a rub joint, for strength. By the 18th century the drawer ran on the linings rather than the bottom and nails were no longer necessary, while the 19th century saw the introduction of quarter-round beading inside the drawer. The beading was not separate but simply part of the additional runner that had been deepened, so the only difference was that this rebated the bottom into the runner rather than the lining; other than that, the running mechanism remained essentially the same.

It's sedentary, Watson

When it comes to chairs, some aspects of their construction have remained remarkably constant over time, but many elements have changed. Until the later 17th century, back legs and backs were designed in a straight line, which made the chair unstable if the sitter leaned too far back. The improved technique of raking the rear legs backwards gave greater strength and stability, and lasts to this day – which, of course, isn't enormously useful for dating! The braces and blocks between the seat rails, however, can offer a more precise guide to age. When pegged construction was the norm for joints, any other form of strengthening was generally absent. With the greater delicacy of 18th century chairs, though, came the diagonal corner brace. These were jointed and glued into the seat rails and sometimes only fitted at the two rear corners. By the 19th century, braces had been replaced by shaped solid blocks fitted in all four corners, and screwed into place to give greater strength as they sometimes supported drop-in seats.

As you can see, trying to ascertain the date of a piece of furniture is a bit of a Sherlock Holmes job, and involves piecing together all the available bits of evidence. Of course, there can be blind alleys and red herrings,





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The background image shows a person's hand resting on a piece of wood on a Triton TWX7 Workcentre System workbench. The workbench is constructed from extruded aluminium sections and features a low-friction work surface. The person is wearing a blue shirt. The workbench is positioned in a workshop setting with a wooden workbench in the background.

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Protecting your projects

Wanting to protect your surfaces but not sure which finish to use? Worry not, as **Michael Huntley** demystifies the myths for you here and offers up some expert tips



The purpose of a finishing system is to protect the object that it is attached to. If you were going to be very careful of the object and protect it, you wouldn't need to apply a surface finish. However, most of us are unable to protect our objects so we need a finishing system. All finishing systems rely on solvents or reactive agents so the place to start is with the solvents.

Surface coatings

A surface coating should have the following properties: provide protection, stop the movement of water and water vapour, adhere well, not be subject to changes in humidity and temperature, be free of defects, add to the appearance of the object, be wear-resistant and easily repaired. A lot to ask of a coating!

There are three common solvents: water, oil and spirit. In some ways water would appear to be the simplest, so let's look at that first.

'Water borne' finishes

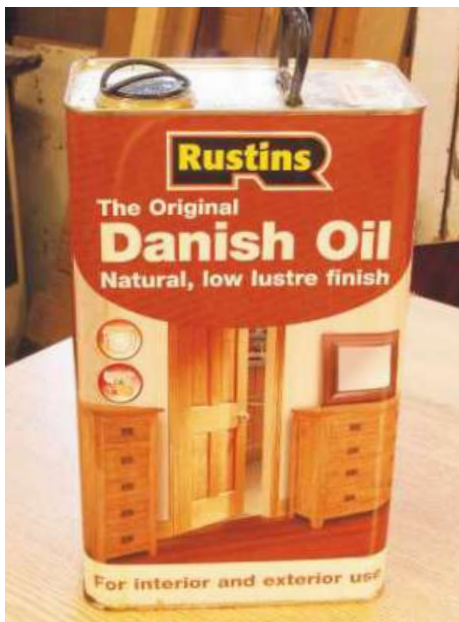
There are many 'water borne' finishes available these days; this is because of the concern over environmental damage caused by VOCs (volatile organic compounds) in spirit finishes. Most paint and varnish manufacturers produce several water-based finishes. However, the finish obtained does not look as good as that obtained by using spirit-based finishes. It can look thick and 'goopy'. They are also not amenable to repair in the same way that spirit-based finishes are. So, if you are choosing a water-based finish, be aware that it won't look 'crisp', it won't 'bring out the colour', it cannot be repaired if abraded, but it is strong and will give you that feeling of saving the planet. As woodworkers we have to ask ourselves: 'how much VOC does our hobby release into the atmosphere?' 'Would cutting out the small amount of amateur use VOCs make a difference?' I am not a chemist but if

there is anyone out there who is and who can answer those questions, please get in touch.

Oil finishes

Now let's consider oil finishes. These are often the preferred finish for amateur work because they are easy to apply and do 'bring out the grain'. The simplest oil finish is linseed oil, but as anyone who has ever oiled a cricket bat knows, it takes a very long time to dry. There are several well-known types of oil. Danish oil is one of the most common and tung oil is another. They all have chemicals added to them to make them dry easily, penetrate, give some water resistance and so on. You need to look on the tin to see what the characteristics are, how many coats you should apply and at what intervals. Try and keep the coats thin; that way you will not have to deal with runs and thick edges. There is an old adage: apply once a day for a week, once a week for a

Woodwork foundations



▲ Pic.1 Danish oil is ideal for both indoor and outdoor use – a great all rounder!

► Pic.2 This hardwax-oil wood finish is extremely tough and hard-wearing

Photographs courtesy of Axminster Tools & Machinery



▲ Pic.3 Protects your wood and is used by the Royal Household – what more could you want?



▲ Pic.4 Formulated in the early part of the last century, Antiquax is used around the globe



▲ Pic.5 Coach-Kote is a 'long oil resin' based product with a long molecular structure, giving it much more durability, flexibility and toughness

month, once a month for a year and once a year thereafter. Depending upon the use of the object, that frequency may be a bit excessive. There are also food-safe oils, and for an object being exposed to water on a regular basis, the above adage may well be right. For outside objects, teak oil is used, and the adage works well for garden furniture. Always buy good quality oil – cheap oils are a waste of time. One thing to be aware of – unless they state otherwise – is that oils will darken with age. This may be fine for, let's say, cherry, but for a blonde timber, darkening would not be desirable. Cloths used to apply oils should always be removed from the workshop as soon as possible and put in a bucket of water, as they can spontaneously combust!

Spirit-based finishes

The last category are spirit-based finishes. These are the ones for which meths, alcohol or 'thinners' are the solvent. These finishes consist

of resins that are dissolved in the spirit, then applied, and once on the surface, 'dry' by evaporation of the solvent. The technical term for drying is curing. Spirit finishes are generally used by professionals. There are health and safety implications with many of these materials. If they are to be used by amateurs, then seek out proper instruction by an experienced professional.

The most well-known spirit-based finish is 'French polish'. In truth, French polish is a technique not a material. The material is shellac. There are various types of shellac and they are dissolved in alcohol before application. The advantage of shellac is that when used by an experienced polisher it is very quick, easy to colour and easy to repair. The disadvantage is that they are not normally water and heat resistant.

Another category of liquid finish is the 'reactive finish'. In this type there is no evaporation, but chemicals react with each

other to 'cure' into a hard surface. These are quite complex to use. The chemistry of finishes is beyond the scope of this article!

Products

There are so many finishing products that it is quite literally hard to know where to start! These are some of the products that I recommend to my students, starting with the simplest:

Danish oil

Straightforward and simple to apply as per instructions (Pic.1). Easy to re-coat; water resistant only; can be waxed once dried. See www.rustins.eu/web/images/infosheet_DanishOil.pdf

Osmo Top oil

A bit more protection and also useful for food preparation surfaces (Pic.2). Easy to re-coat, food-safe and water repellent. See www.osmouk.com/images/pdf/pi/topoil.pdf



▲ Pic.6 The Behlen range contains a wide variety of varnishes – see www.behlen.co.uk

Devon Wood Oil

This is an eco friendly, hard-wearing oil that is re-coatable and can be used inside and outside, so has significant water and ring marking resistance (Pic.3). See www.wilsonspaints.co.uk/devon-wood-oil

Waxes – Antiquax or Mylands

There are many waxes available, but don't use the soft ones, as they can collect dust. Leave for a decent length of time before burnishing off. Easy to re-coat; water resistant for a short time but wipe any spills off quickly (Pic.4).

Coach-Kote

This is a very high quality, hard-wearing interior and exterior varnish made for prestige work by the Royal Warrant Holders (Pic.5). See www.wilsonspaints.co.uk/coach-kote

wilsonspaints.co.uk/woodcare/varnish/coach-kote

Behlen varnishes

A large range of varnishes, mostly water-based but with one solvent-based varnish (Pic.6). There is a good chart of finishing products and their characteristics available here: www.behlen.co.uk/tools/behlenfinishpropertieschartv9.pdf

Teak oil

This is a good, simple, general purpose oil for outdoor use only. Various suppliers (Pic.7).

Bourne Seal

I use this for floors and heavy use furniture around my house (Pic.8). Resists ring marking and heat. Is easily re-coatable – just wash



▲ Pic.7 Teak Oil is a traditional blend of solvents and linseed oil



▲ Pic.8 A Solvent-based wood sealer that provides protection against wear and water damage



▲ Pic.9 This classic Pale Polish produces a superb finish and is suitable for antique table tops

down, let the surface dry, then re-coat. Scratches can be touched in with a fine brush. See www.diverseysolutions.com/uk/Category/11203/Product/10108

Shellac Special Pale Polish – Mylands

Shellac polish finished with a coat of wax is the best finish for nice furniture that is not subject to heavy wear. Easy to re-coat, but not water/alcohol resistant (Pic.9). See www.mylands.co.uk/special-pale-polish

NEXT MONTH

In the last of his 'Woodwork Foundations' series, Michael moves on to looking at the subject of timber, before he returns with a new series on Japanese joinery

I wanted to make something that was simple in design, and yet simultaneously showed off the skills that I'd learned in my first year at college. Minimalist-styled tables with straight, angular lines interested me, and so I decided on a chunky coffee table that would last for many years – making it an ideal gift for my parents.

The idea of using a box-like structure with no defined legs appealed to me as an exciting starting point. Having drawn several sketches of open-sided boxes, I developed a real feel for what I wanted, and began sketching out similar designs with really thick tops and sides. I eventually included a shelf, for practical reasons, really, as it means magazines can be stored away very easily.

Maximum impact

Sean Healy made this simply-designed table to demonstrate his new joint-making skills

The simple design meant that I could show off the joint-making skills that I'd acquired so far, so the only two prerequisites for my project actually went hand in hand. I like the idea of very visible, exposed joints, which function literally and aesthetically as an integral feature in furniture; if they're not comprised of screws and fittings, why hide them away?

Finally, so as to balance out the table's

chunkiness, I incorporated a concave curve at the bottom of the table's two ends, which I thought would reduce that angular look just a little.

Decisions, dimensions

With the general shape of my table designed I had to decide on what joints to use to hold it all together. It seemed sensible (considering that I was trying to show off my skills!) to use

joints that I was reasonably competent in making, but this narrowed my selection down to dovetails, and mortise and tenons. So, fancying a bit of a challenge, I went for a wedged mortise and tenon, as I hadn't made this before.

Chunky doesn't necessarily mean heavy, of course, so adding substance by using solid timber all the way through seemed like a good



▲ Pic.1 The strong emphasis that the New College course puts on hand tools...



▲ Pic.2...has equipped me with the ability to make these finely cut joints



▲ Pic.3 It wasn't possible for me to dry fit the dovetails...

idea. I knew that timber up to 100mm-thick was readily available so, allowing plenty of room for planing and thickening, I used 80mm-thick wood for each section; the shelf was 40mm. The footprint proportions were taken from my parents' previous coffee table, and I also looked at other designs to get an average feel for how big a coffee table should be. I settled on a size of 1,200 × 600 × 500mm.

Timber selection came down to economics, as well as how best to complement the other oak furniture in the room. I decided I would use ash, as it's open-grained like oak. For the shelf I wanted a darker timber so as to create an interesting contrast, and walnut seemed a good idea – until I saw the price! I opted for iroko instead, which would offer me the chance to gain some experience of working with interlocked timber. To add to the contrast, my wedges for the mortise and tenons would be made from purpleheart.

When my timber arrived, I was somewhat surprised by the size of the boards, and a little worried about the logistics of actually chopping them up. Working out how to do this took quite a while, but I basically decided that the top and both sides would be made out of four pieces each, and I would try and match the grain round the three sides. I needed a few helping hands to manoeuvre the timber when cross-cutting it to length, and then ripping down the sections, but the Wadkin dimension saw had no trouble handling it at all!

With all the parts now sawn to rough sizes, I planed and thickened them down, leaving them slightly larger than the finished sizes. I used PVA and 10 sash cramps for the glue-up, and four G-cramps, as well as a couple of



▲ Pic.4...but the well-fitting mortise and tenons buoyed my confidence

battens each end, to align the boards. I did think about using biscuits for alignment, but this seemed like an unnecessary complication, as the glue would be strong enough anyway. When dry, the speed-sander was used to bring everything down to the final thicknesses.

Before starting any joints, I began to shape the bottoms of the two table ends. I used a trammel to mark out the curves and a bandsaw to cut out the waste, finally smoothing over with a compass plane. To take off the sharp edges, I used a block plane and convex spokeshave.

Creating the joints

I cut the tenons for my shelf over-size, as they're through-tenons, and used a Japanese Kataba saw to cut the waste out, as well as



▲ Pic.5 I chose purpleheart wedges to heighten the contrast between the timbers

large chisels to clean the joint. I chose the Japanese saw because it doesn't have a back restricting the depth of cut, making for a very fine and fast cut. I also used a Japanese saw for the wedge mortises, drilling a hole at the bottom of the wedges to prevent them bottoming out.

Cutting all the dovetails by hand was quite a challenge because they were so big, but my Japanese saw made short work of removing most of the waste. As I was cutting, I thought about how the tails would come together at glue-up, and remembered reading about undercutting them to ease assembly. This seemed like an extremely good idea as it would stop the bigger surface area of the tails from rubbing too much. I pared the tails away to make sure that just 10-15mm around the edges of the joint would touch, meaning that the joints would smoothly ease together at glue-up (or so I hoped!).

For the pins, I put one side into the vice vertically and, resting the table top on this, traced the tails. Getting it level and perfectly positioned was quite hard, but after a few nervous minutes of constantly looking and checking with a square, I just had to go for it and mark it out.



▲ Pic.6 The tenons were left over-size...



▲ Pic.7...and cut flush with a Japanese saw



▲ Pic.8 The bottoms of the ends were curved to soften the angular lines

I tried to use a bandsaw to remove most of the waste, but I broke the blade! Using a jigsaw instead worked to a certain extent, but the blade was not that long and didn't reach right to the other side. So I resorted to drilling out the waste with a Forstner bit from both sides, and cleaning it up with chisels; this prevented any damage to the shoulder line and was the best approach I could find. I cleared the mortises of my shelf in the same way.

Dry fitting and gluing up

With all the jointing complete, it was time for a dry fit. Because my table was so thick, it seemed impossible to dry fit the dovetails, so there was only one chance for those – the final glue-up, which was therefore destined to be the most nerve-racking part of the whole project. But at least I could dry fit my mortise and tenon joints, which bolstered my confidence by going together very well – so well, in fact, that it was difficult to pull them apart! Two big mallets and 10 minutes of

bashing later and I had the ends free of the shelf. Consequently, I put the shelf through the wide belt speed-sander and took off 0.5mm so that those tenons would slide a little more easily. To make the wedges, I knocked up a simple jig made from MDF and used the bandsaw to cut them from the purpleheart.

Finally, I was ready for the final fit and glue-up. Time for some stress! If I'd got my joints slightly out, there wouldn't be much I could do to remedy the problem. I knew my mortise and tenons were good and tight, I was just hoping the dovetails would do their job. I used Cascamite glue in a fairly weak mixture to allow a longer glue-up time and reduce 'creep', and clamped the shelf to the sides with big T-bar sash cramps, before putting the whole thing on a bench and attaching the top. To do this, I dropped it onto the sides – a little bashing here and there registered it with the pins – and it began to drop down. When I got the sash cramps on to pull the top down, it was pretty much a case of turning the cramps in unison, so as to get the right amount of pressure from each cramp. This worked very well, and at last I breathed a big sigh of relief.

Now it was time to trim the excess from my tenons and wedges. As I said, the tenons were made over-size so that I could get a nice flush finish, and here my Japanese saw came into

its own, as I was able to bend the saw as I cut, enabling me to remove a vast amount of waste. I then used a sharp block plane to take the last few end-grain shavings off. My trusty old Record No.5½ worked great for truing up the sides, creating some lovely wispy shavings.

Final touches

At this stage the table was looking terrific and I couldn't wait to get a finish on it to really bring out the grain. But first I picked up a power sander, starting at 100 grit to get rid of a little tear-out, then through the grits 120, 180, 240, and finishing with a hand sand at 320. This produced a superbly smooth surface, ready for the finish. Sanding showed up some of the errors in my table, mainly in the dovetails, which didn't all quite meet up. The gaps were only about 0.5mm, though, and I filled them with coloured wax crayons. I think it would be unrealistic of me to have expected to get every joint perfectly tight, as the joints are huge, and I didn't have the benefit of dry fitting to finesse them. For the finish, I considered using a spray lacquer, but it would've been hard to get in between the shelf and top. In the end, I decided to use Danish oil, as it's quick and easy to apply, and easy to recoat if necessary. **GW**



The completed table

£3000 competition

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I remember recently looking out from a balcony over a woodworking show and below me was a sea of grey haired gentlemen almost **ALL** of a certain age, a bit like myself. Old guys like us cannot win this prize but **YOU** may know some young person who **IS** interested in making and can apply. Can **YOU** put this application form in their hand?

We are looking for a young person aged under 25 who loves making; someone who can send us photos of a thing they have made who may be struggling without tools and doing loads with an electric drill and a hot-melt glue gun, but not much else. Someone who would really benefit from a tool chest like this at the beginning of their making life. So if you know anyone, please get them to apply and help us to encourage the young woodworkers of tomorrow! **David Savage**



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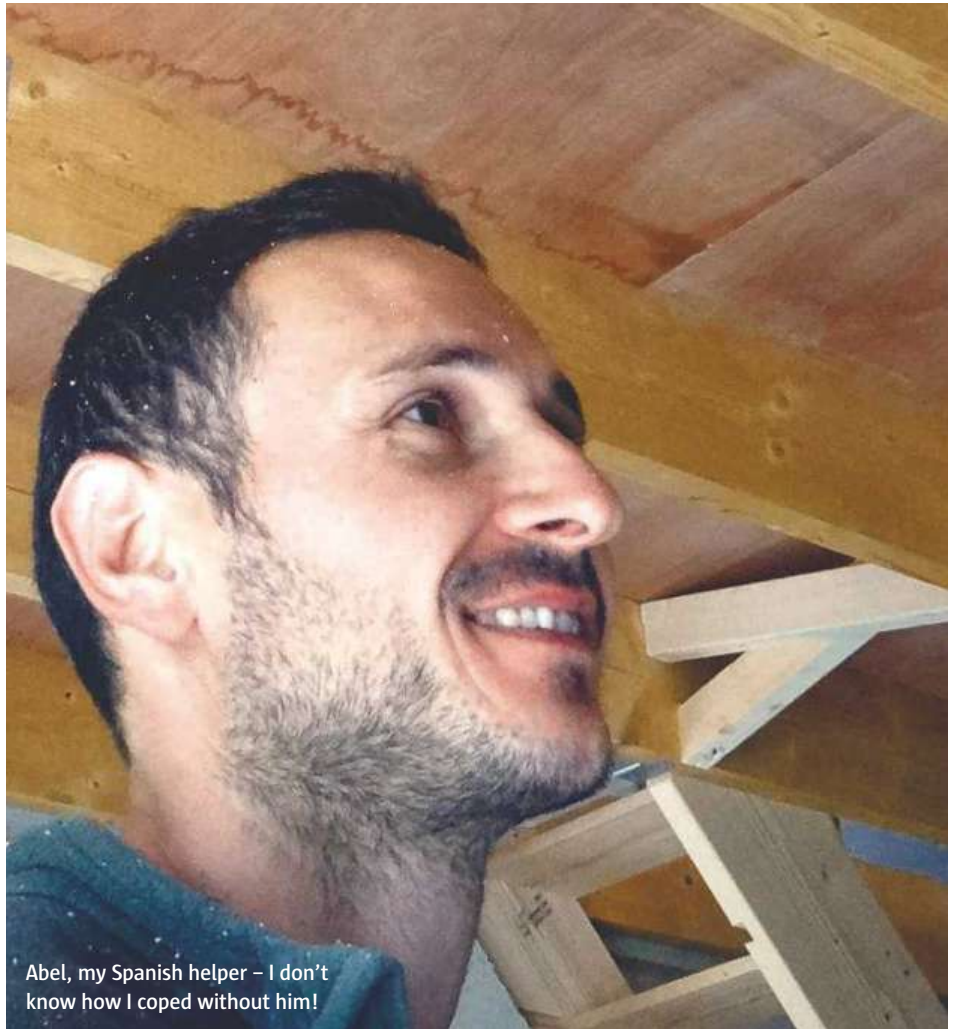
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Edward Hopkins shows us his recently made log shed, discusses the benefits of the efficient Relax workshop stove and introduces us to his helpful sidekick!



Abel, my Spanish helper – I don't know how I coped without him!

Shedding the load

No one could be better named; not because if you hit him – not that I'd know – the whole neighbourhood would hear of it, but because of his skills. Abel comes from Palencia in northern Spain, and he's here with us for a month to improve his English. I've already taught him 'baton', 'level', 'tight', 'no, not there, over here', 'the weather isn't always like this' and, 'I know this might not look like a huge amount of fun but how about we put the scaffolding tower together, bolt the roof hooks to the ladder, then wire brush, fill and paint the chimney, twice?'

He doesn't flinch, and I suspect that if I didn't pack up work, he'd just keep going. Everything he does is tidy, efficient and accurate. He's a gift, and has moved my building work on apace.

It's not all one way traffic. I correct his pronunciation and pull him up on his future pluperfects – it is what he's here for. I share with him Frannie's fantastic food, and we've taken him to the coast to sit in a field and hopefully teach us how to be better

watercolourists (he's an artist and a good one at that). In this alone he has some way to go.

Before he came I had him down for chainsawing (his application said he could). A sheep had preferred our garden to her field and had broken down our chicken fence. The farmer, well beyond the call of duty, renewed the fence along our boundary and, in the process, delivered several large trailer loads of oak, hazel and sycamore trunks that will provide us with firewood for a couple of years. A few months ago this gave rise to the log shed.

Log shed

A log shed has two functions: to contain the logs and to shelter them from the rain. If possible it should be well ventilated, for if logs are kept in an airless store they will dry slowly and grow all sorts of wispy slimy things. I can site my shed on the east side of the house, hidden from most of the rain, so I can afford maximum ventilation.

Rather, I cannot not afford it. The more gaps there are in my shed, the more the wind blows through but better than that; more gaps means less materials so less cost, and presumably less labour. There is a limit: if the gaps are too big, the logs will roll through. My shed should be as cheap as possible, obviously. Oh, and easy. I have a mortiser and a radial arm saw; that's all. And it has to look attractive.

Wait! I don't mean that. Not attractive, but stunningly beautiful, because even a log shed has a right to shine. I want it to be fun. If you were to be into log sheds at all, I'd like to think you'd turn the corner of our house and, if not stop, at least slow down. I hope you'd get the joke. It's not much of a joke perhaps, but it is one.

Fixing dilemma

I spent a while wondering how I would fix the shed to the wall and to its concrete pads. Metal brackets would have been the most obvious, but the crudest solution. Instead, I alighted on two standard fixings that would do the job perfectly.



My first log shed made of available and found materials. It's not quite big enough now

A sprung bolt is made for a wide door about to swing open; the hook and eye is to hold it when it does: but here, neither does either but the opposite. The bolts stop the logs pushing the sides out: the hooks and eye stop the shed moving against the house. They are all that is needed. And so fittings that imply lightness and free movement in practice provide rigidity and strength. I like this. Woodwork can be a lonely business: it's best if you can keep yourself amused. Humour is a serious matter. There's no reason why a piece of furniture shouldn't make you smile: there is every reason why it should. I don't mean an ear to ear grin but an inner sigh of recognition and happy acceptance. A piece of furniture is no less capable than a canvas of carrying emotion.

The 'falling' structure

A more subtle joke is the 'falling' structure of the log shed. It gives a dynamic, an appearance of movement while at the same time it triangulates the sides, making them rigid.

Here my budget (an imaginary concept) went awry when, not knowing the difference between 'galvanised' and 'zinc plated', I bought a bag of bolts as pricey as a weekly shop. Secretly, I did not mind. They are beautiful industrial rustic artifacts and you know they will never give way.

I assembled the shed alone. I thought for a moment that it wouldn't be possible, but my jointing came to my aid. I'd made both sides and had to tie them together with horizontals. This is a big structure and I couldn't hold both

ends at once. I had to locate the joints and drive them home, far enough to locate the next joints, and so on up.

Only at the beginning was there a risk of collapse. If one or both sides had fallen, they would have damaged themselves, their environment and possibly me. At least they would have damaged my pride.

I used stout tenons on the rails and mortises in the frames. The friction fit of the joints after just a few taps held the frame together quickly and increasingly securely. When it was as tight as it would go, I could knock a joint tighter still, then pin it in place with two 75mm nails through its haunches, dovetailed like a barb that would not pull out. I enjoyed that.

The longest thing of any description I had was a piece of plastic downpipe so I used that to read across. I read wrong (I think the pipe was bent). I'll shutter the concrete blocks and work in a bucket of muck up to level to catch the underside of the frame. But I'm not doing it next week as it's Abel's last, and he is too valuable to be on minor jobs. In the meanwhile the stability of the log shed rests on one small garden rock. He's too useful for chainsawing as well so you'll have to imagine the logs.



... and the hooks and eye stop the shed moving against the house

Shavings to burn

One of the less appealing aspects of woodworking is the amount of waste it generates. At worst, a round tree is sawn into square planks, which are further sawn and planed then turned into smaller rounds – how wasteful and perverse is that?

It helps if there's something you can do with bin bags of waste; of planer shavings or sawdust with assorted small bits and pieces. They don't make good garden mulch as they take too long to compost.

I've tried bonfires. I'd wait for a still day and make a pyramid of shavings (not dust) with paper underneath. It'd burn, but it took a long time. It went faster if I poked it, but then the flames sent airborne fountains of charred fragments like a small firework; these particles of ash settling next morning all over the garden as a flurry of demonic snow.



I used two standard fixings here: the bolts stop the logs pushing the sides out...



My log shed, which features zinc plated bolts to add a touch of luxury!



The diagonals on the back are pieces of roofing baton tightly cut into the frame. They triangulate the back, providing a sudden and startling rigidity to the whole structure



Please excuse the foundation block on the right which ended up lower than the one on the left. I was hasty

I burned shavings in my Dovre woodburning stove, with the doors open, and a mound of shavings inside. This was visually interesting (like having a model volcano) but again, it needed prodding and watching for a while. Sometimes I lost hours: I couldn't close the doors for risk of explosion.

Wood can cause explosions in two ways. I know one of them because it's happened in our living room. Our woodburning stove – burning logs, door closed – gave off a loud 'whoomph'! The stove had been smouldering; giving off but not combusting volatile gasses. The concentration of gas grew and eventually self-ignited in one massive guffaw of relief. Richard too has had this happen: it blew his glass across the room.

The other one I know from when I bought a dust extractor. It was an oil drum with three motors in the lid (it worked well). I'd more or less agreed to buy it when I noticed a couple of welded hooks, and a piece of chain hanging down one side. 'What's that for?' I asked. 'That' the salesman said, hooking the chain loosely across the lid, 'is so that if sparks in the motors ignite the dust cloud in the drum, the top won't blow off and fly off across the workshop.' I saw why he'd left that information to last.

To answer these questions and one important more, 'how can I prevent myself freezing in winter?' I've installed a Relax R3 workshop stove in my garage. It'll burn shavings and sawdust safely and efficiently. I hadn't seen one in action so I didn't really know, but anyway, there wasn't much choice.

Its flue is an enamelled pipe right up through the floor and under the ceiling, changing to twin wall insulated flue through the roof, and beyond. Before you tell me that this is against regulations, and only one metre of single-wall flue is permitted, I'll say 'it's not a house, it's a garage.' I think the regulation is to do with condensation of tar and soot. But I, your honour, will burn only dry dust, shavings and offcuts. There will be no tar in my flue.

If I needed ratification of this, it's when I tried out the stove for the first time. It was, admittedly, the hottest day of summer, so I was quickly impressed, but what I didn't expect was the lightning speed with which the five metre pipe heated up. Within a minute or two it was too hot to touch, all this heat, of course, radiating out.

There's no trick to lighting it. Fill it up with waste, poke a lighted match into the shavings and close the lid. Within a minute or two the stove will roar. Almost shut down the twin vents and it will burn for a couple of hours.

Tongue & groove cladding

Tongue & groove is a quick and efficient cladding as long as you have someone else to hold the end of a floppy 4.2m strip. Here, Abel did all the hidden nailing (25mm panel pins seemed enough) and I did the chopsawing. I'll give it a coat of liquid wax one day, but that can wait. If you're doing something similar, buy




The Relax R3 workshop stove, which I've installed in my garage. It burns shavings and sawdust safely and efficiently

the wood long in advance of using it and keep it somewhere warm and dry.

How was I to hold the chimney flue (three times its own diameter away from combustible materials; twice its diameter from non-combustible) without paying over the odds (I feel) for manufactured brackets and straps, which may or may not solve my particular problem? I didn't know. Instead, I went out on the prowl but I didn't have to prowl far. In the hardware section of a builders' merchant's that I almost never go to were some standard Japanned 'T' hinges for next to no money. A quick mock-up on the counter established that if they were cocked up together (and bolted to a 'T' bracket looped round a jubilee clip) the dimensions were just right. And so four pairs of hinges designed and made to swing freely are now going to earn their keep by moving nowhere at all. It's the same mini-joke as above, but I am not the comedian. I didn't make these hinges happen: they happened to me.

The corners where the tongue & groove meets the (non-combustible) gypsum board need to be capped. My first thought was wood but those profiles are horribly expensive. I think I'll go for white plastic. I know, you might be right, but I think I'll give it a go anyway.

Find out more home truths next month! 

Further info

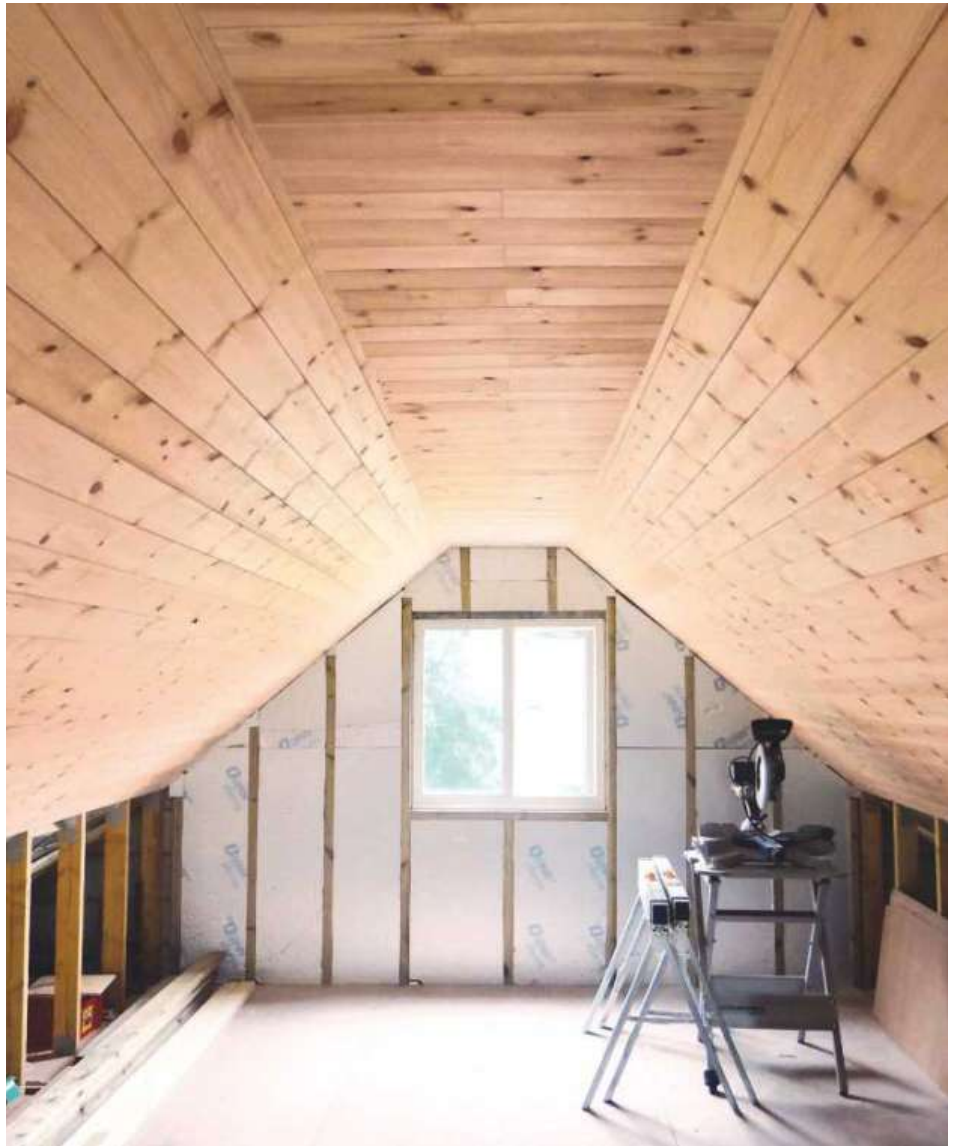
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Tongue & groove seemed an obvious choice for cladding my garage



These standard Japanned 'T' hinges were ideal for holding the flue pipe in place



The Fishing Hut

European oak from France; Douglas Fir from Southern England

“The site is a man-made lake, originally built as a fish farm, fed by a river that defines its southern boundary. The client wanted a secure place to store boats and fishing tackle that could also function as a meeting place and shelter for anglers.

The building is supported on 18 pad foundations formed from precast concrete drainage rings placed on the lake bed and filled with concrete. Nine galvanised steel goalpost frames are fixed to the pad foundations supporting the timber floor structure and glulam oak superstructure. The roof is made of softwood rafters, clad internally with oak boards and externally with profiled aluminium sheeting on larch battens. The building’s structure

organises its plan into 10 bays of 1.8m. Below the eaves, shutters and cladding formed of open jointed timber planks enclose the six central bays. This enclosure comprises a weather-tight internal space of four bays and a semi-enclosed storage area.

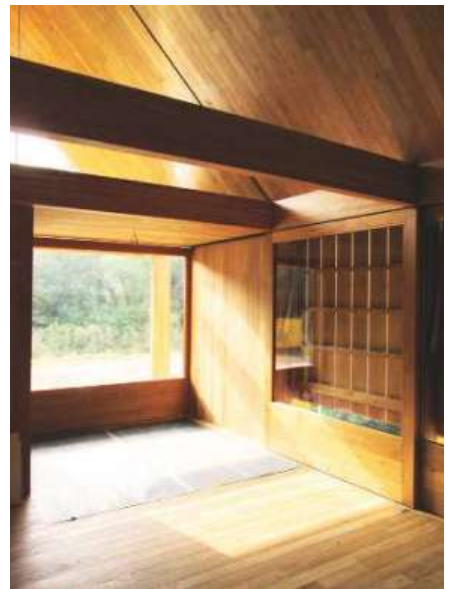
When closed, the pitched roof and handling of the cladding refers directly to the construction of modern agricultural buildings. Oak was chosen for the exposed timber structure and cladding due to its colour and grain. The untreated exterior timber will weather to match the silver-grey of the roof cladding and steel supports.”

Niall McLaughlin Architects



Wood Awards shortlist

Located in Hampshire and designed by Niall McLaughlin Architects, this stunning fishing hut is shortlisted in the Private category of this year's Wood Awards. The structural engineers for this project were Price & Myers and the joinery company was Inwood Developments Ltd. Timber was supplied by E.C. Forest Products and East Brothers Timber Ltd. The judges felt this fishing hut to be 'a beautifully crafted piece of joinery that has been carefully designed to change in response to both its occupiers and to nature' **GW**





Fancy winning your own tool chest full of tools, plus a Basics Course at Rowden? See page 39!

In the court of King Arthur: "I'm trying to open their eyes," said Chris, "even if it's only to know they don't want to work this way. Maybe it'll give them an edge, a different ways of doing things"

A Yankee in King Arthur's court?

Ever the Twain: the New World and the Old met when Chris Schwarz brought his hand tool revivalism to the Rowden Workshops, as **Dave Roberts** found out

It's sometimes said that Americans don't 'do' irony, but after an evening in the pub with Chris Schwarz, who was the guest tutor at David Savage's Rowden Workshop last month, I'm less sure than ever that that's fair. Best known, perhaps, as the author of *The Anarchist's Tool Chest*, Chris is also the moving force behind the Lost Art Press, and – though it almost amounts to the same thing – a champion of hand tool woodworking. As such, he has plenty of material for ironic comment: he's made a 20-year study of the resources, skills, and subtle simplicity that characterised hundreds of years of woodworking but which have been lost during the 'progress' of the 20th century, as the West's increasingly consumption-orientated society has blown us backwards into the future. Chris, however – who's forthright in his views, and passionate in his approach – doesn't waste time with rhetorical games: this New World 'anarchist' is too busy trying to restore an understanding of the good sense and workshop practices that we have carelessly allowed ourselves to forget.



Stirring it up: One of the results of bringing in Chris Schwarz, David admits, is that, "I've been reminded about stuff I knew but had forgotten" – like the merits of hide glue for carcass work



Michael, from Belgium, builds guitars as a hobby and joined the two-week summer school to learn more about furniture-making. As well as discovering sand-shading the veneer for the inside of the tool chest, "the joinery we did here – dovetail joints, for example – was completely new to me. It's good to know, though, that with the right guidance, anyone can do it if they have the patience." And while he found the pace of the course testing – "we had to finish the chest in a week, and that's a lot of work; you have to learn technique and speed" – he believes there's no substitute for having a teacher standing next to you

Even so, Chris is quite aware of the gentle irony in all this: "I'm trying to introduce [the Rowden students] to their own heritage, like a Connecticut Yankee in the court of King Arthur" – and when it comes to fine furniture-making, of course, Rowden is something of a Camelot. "It's what I do in the States, but it's a little more pointed here because I'm in the house where it all came together: in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the best joinery that's ever been done in the Western world was done on this island. The French looked to you, the Dutch Modern was a reaction to your traditional styles; your joinery has never been eclipsed, so you need to seize that, understand where you came from, and dive in and celebrate it."

Agent provocateur

At least, helping the students understand, seize and celebrate is Chris' intention. David, on the other hand, has added a twist to the agenda: "I asked Chris here," he says, stirring a pot of hide glue in what, in the right light, might almost be a mischievous fashion, "because I was slightly concerned that [Rowden's students] were getting too slow and precise; that precision was becoming a sort of god." And while excellence, of which accuracy is a part, is one of Rowden's goals and accomplishments, the school is also trying to train makers who can exercise commercial judgement. So, because Chris has not only an in-depth understanding of the hand tool work that is the foundation of that accuracy, but also of the traditional practices of the journeyman joiner, David brought him in as an agent provocateur – someone who'll show the students different methods, and force them to consider what is 'appropriate workmanship'.

"Every year," says David, by way of explaining the term, "we go to the Arts & Crafts Museum in Cheltenham," which houses what he

considers to be the pinnacle of great hand-craftsmanship, but which nonetheless features drawer backs that have been planed but aren't flat. "That's appropriate workmanship. The primary surface, magic; the handles and catches, gorgeous, spend your time there; but the undersides of tables? Mmm-yeah" – probably not so important, though not unimportant. "You have to understand how the nature of quality is judged" – and here he mimes the hand that reaches to search the



Cake! Mrs S does make an exceedingly good cake, one of Rowden's afternoon rituals

David Savage's Rowden Workshop



Chris Schwarz: "I read very old books, figure out what's going on, recreate 'shop techniques and try to put them back into practice. That's what I do"



New World and Old meet in the matter of human furniture-making endeavour: struggle for perfection and fail valiantly!



Mark, an entirely self-taught maker who has worked alone for 20 years, enjoyed the atmosphere of the workshop: "There's something about being in company; it's really nice talking to the bench next door while you're working," while the friendly competition that arises between students, he believes, adds a helpful impetus to that work

underside of a surface or the hidden face for the signs of the craftsman's presence – "but without going to excessive lengths." Going the whole way all the time – making a god of precision – isn't the answer.

"At the start, it's tough to make that judgement. So we give them the skills and tools to be accurate, and then take them away from them – but not so quickly that they topple over! – and then challenge them to decide what's appropriate." It's Chris, then, who has done the "taking away" by asking the students – joined by visiting woodworkers here for the fortnight summer school – to make a tool chest (see sidebar on page 52) using many methods and materials that haven't been part of their pursuit of precision at Rowden – materials like hide glue. "Even I've been reminded about stuff I knew," the old master admits, "but had forgotten, like using animal glue for carcass assembly. It's something I abandoned years ago because I couldn't afford the hot pot and picked up PVA instead; I'd simply forgotten that hide glue is a better assembly glue."

Lessons of the past

It's an admission, of course, that would delight Chris: "We've used animal-based glue since the Egyptians, but gave up on it in 1955 when PVA was introduced." Since then – and this is a point David makes, too – "we've made a whole generation of furniture that can't be repaired because PVA doesn't stick to itself. Take apart a chair made before World War II and you can put more hide glue on it, which will dissolve [any glue residue] and it'll go back together better than new. But PVA? You have to scrape it off, and you'll take off some wood with it," so the fit will never be the same. Luthiers, Chris says, wouldn't dream of using anything but hide glue because musical instruments need to be maintained. "There are applications for PVA, such as in veneering, but for 90% of what we do in furniture...." he shrugs, leaving the obvious unsaid.

So what else has he introduced? "Nails. Nails had been used since Roman times in very fine furniture but became a dirty word. Part of it was snobbery, but part of it was a technological problem." The round shanks of modern wire nails, introduced in the 1860s, are quicker to use because they go in without pilot holes; traditional, square-shanked nails require pilot holes to avoid the risk of splitting, but will carry 380-400% more load. So to attach the bottom of the tool chest, Chris made the student use

"I found Chris inspiring," said Sofie, and the confidence boost that comes of making something "half-decent but very quickly," as she puts it, was something all the students appreciated





Darren is one of the four teachers at Rowden who, together with David, give the school an enviable teacher-to-student ratio

traditional cold-drawn, blued nails made after the Roman pattern (which, if you're curious, can be bought from, among other places, Objects of Use in Oxford, and Dictum in Germany, both of which are easy to find on the web). Nailing on the bottom was not only pragmatic – it meant it could be replaced when it rotted in damp workshops – but quick, too, compared to the modern approach which would probably be to fit the bottom in a rebate, and involve setting up machining operations, tackling a glue-up that involves the bottom panel, all leading to a base that can no longer be easily repaired.

Different measures

To challenge their judgement of accuracy, meanwhile, Chris took away rulers and replaced them with pinch rods to check diagonals, and dividers to lay out dovetails. "You find that's another truth in old work: they rarely used numbers. Early rulers were only divided into eighths of an inch, yet they built things very precisely [because] to build a one-off piece of furniture, one part just has to fit another." A story stick marked with critical dimensions will take the place of a ruler, and transferring measurements part-to-part, or using dividers and knives to mark out, eliminates the potential for error that lies in calculations, reading scales, or even the thickness of a pencil.

"Furniture," Chris maintains, "has to look right to your eye, not the ruler. I don't experience furniture with a calliper; I experience it with my eye – does it look good, does it sit, does it work? You experience furniture with your body – that's the only measure."

Another of the things that Chris tried to take away from the students was time, by pushing them to work quickly with these unfamiliar materials and methods. He introduced them to gang-sawing of dovetails, for instance: "English joiners would saw as many as 10 at a time, cutting all the tails for drawers at once; that'll

save you half a day right there." It also aids accuracy because the width of material helps keep the saw on the line.

Mixed reactions

In the event, time – one of David's concerns – doesn't seem to have been too much of an issue for the students, who proved that if you have learned to be accurate, you can always become faster. In fact, they all found Chris' 'speed challenge' beneficial: "When I made the carcass," says Michael, who came to furniture-making via a year studying civil engineering, "I said: 'I'm just going to do it; I won't try to do it 100%. But in the end it was almost perfect, which' – and here everyone agreed – "builds your confidence."

There were other benefits, too, the Rowden team admit, though gang-sawing and maybe the use of dividers for laying out are the only ones on which they immediately agree. Paul, an Australian nearing the end of his course, is also taken by the forged nails: "We were quite snobbish about them, but Chris opened our eyes to their versatility and beauty. I can imagine myself using them in pieces in future." Michael is more equivocal: "I like the way



Though the engineer in him resisted, when Michael decided to go along with Chris' more relaxed approach to rule and line, he found that the accuracy of his work suffered very little

they look, and they really suit something like the tool chest, but they don't suit fine woodworking...." But then, on reflection: "They could be a nice detail in a dining table, though." His views on hide glue are more definite, however: "It isn't my cup tea" – having said which he has ordered a book on the subject; after all, you have a duty to know just what it is you're dismissing.

Sofie, on the other hand, who studied art history before coming to England from Denmark, says, "I love the idea of a reversible glue!" As she's learned to trust the old technology, she's come to appreciate its advantages over PVA, such as the more discrete glue lines, and its less problematic effect on finishes. The art-historian in her has also been fascinated by the context that Chris' knowledge affords: "It's really inspiring to hear the history



Carrying on the tradition: art-historian Sofie found that the context that Chris' insights have provided made her feel more a part of furniture-making's long tradition

David Savage's Rowden Workshop



Rose: "Everyone has learned something from Chris, but everyone has learned something different." The old saw, by the way, is being used to provide a key before veneering the panel

behind everything; you feel that you're part of a tradition. You always knew you were, of course, but you didn't have the details." How this tradition is carried on today, however, is where the students find themselves at variance with other aspects of the 'lost art' approach.

Working from prepared stock, they have built

the tool chest without winding sticks, and without their usual squares and straightedges. "Chris isn't too bothered with being perfectly flat, or perfectly square," Matt maintains. "He's just, 'If it looks square, it is square.'" However, they found that not checking that panels are flat and square, for instance, affected the fit of

Any colour you like



The students with their completed tool chests

...as long as it's black. That's the traditional British colour, Chris maintains, for a tool chest like this, whose design isn't so much a copy as a distillation of patterns that Chris has studied. "They came in three sizes, each designed to house a certain kit of tools. The medium-sized chest would hold what a city cabinetmaker would have had minus a full set of moulding planes, though you can fit them in at a pinch. Everything you need would be in here, ready to hand," because it's Chris' contention, based on what earlier craftsmen accomplished, that you only need around 50 tools to build anything.

And the black? "There are accounts from Gillows of Lancaster – one of the greatest

British furniture makers of the 18th and 19th centuries, and probably more important than Chippendale, Sheraton and Hepplewhite – that talk about 'glossy black chests.'" However, the students were apparently aghast when Chris told them the chests were going to be painted. Besides, the outside of a journeyman joiner's tool chest would've been deliberately plain, not only to take the knocks and be easy to repair with a fresh coat of paint, but also to deter theft.

The inside, on the other hand, was elaborated not only with compartments to store tools but sometimes decorated with a little marquetry, for example, to serve as a testament to the maker's skills.

the chests' trays, so time-saving at one stage led to more work further down the line. Chris' response, they report, has been that, 'that's the traditional way', but it's a standard, Michael argues, which has no place in contemporary fine furniture – which brings us round to that question of 'appropriate workmanship'.

The point hasn't been lost on the students, of course: they quite understand the argument about balancing effort and return, and judging, as Matt puts it, where any imperfections may be allowed to fall. It's just that they believe the margin for any imperfections at all has been greatly reduced. "The world that we are living in is more precise," says Michael, summing up the general feeling among the students. "So it's harder to make furniture today because people are more critical."

God is not in the machine

Both David and Chris, however, argue that this machine-age perception is not only an unfair standard for flesh-and-blood furniture-makers to burden themselves with, but one that risks, "eliminating the very quality of your humanity from the surface," to borrow David's phrase.

"You can't win against machines," Chris agrees. "The machine will always be more perfect, but the machine can't do everything that the hand can do. In our manufactured world, we think that everything should be smooth inside and out, but there's more than one texture. Old, extremely well-made furniture has different textures on the bottom; I don't mean splintery, but gently scalloped, and it can be very beautiful. The way dovetails are spaced when done by eye – a machine just can't do that. These little imperfections are what makes our work special, and" – as part of the way in which, as David said, the nature of quality is judged – "I think it is something that people can sense. I take the view that handmade furniture should look like it's made by hands. I'm not saying be sloppy – do the best work you can – but I am saying that the perfection of hand-made [furniture] is different."

Perhaps time is, after all, really the issue, though not in the sense of speed but in terms of acquiring the perspective that experience affords? For whereas the students are at the start of their careers, the techniques that Chris has offered them come from many lifetimes of experience and working practice. "I tell them," Chris says, "This is stuff from people who lived hundreds of years ago and were better than you; it's worth listening to" – and remembering, too, because somewhere along the road they might find themselves needing to fall into step with those vanished craftsmen. From the vantage point of his career, meanwhile, David has the last word on the pursuit of perfection: "Let the machine do what the machine does, and you do what you can do – which is to struggle for perfection and fail valiantly! Skilfulness is knowing that it's never going to be perfect." **GW**

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For award-winning furniture maker **Craig Thibodeau**, refinement and complexity are key as he pushes himself to produce the best Asian, Art Deco and Arts & Crafts inspired pieces possible, as **Tegan Foley** discovers

I came across Craig Thibodeau's work purely by chance, but oh how glad I am that I did!

What instantly jumped out to me was the luxurious little touches he adds to his pieces, such as the opal and ebony inlaid table and the way these little highlights just elevate the piece to something that is so exquisitely beautiful. Yes, as you can tell, I'm a big fan.

Looking at his work, you'd instantly assume that this furniture maker would have a wealth of professional training under his belt, but you'd be wrong. Largely self-taught, Craig Thibodeau actually worked in engineering after graduating and his interest in woodworking was only something he began to explore as an evening and weekend escape, and then it started to grow.

Remembering his childhood, Craig explains that his father was a hobby woodworker who built a variety of furniture and accessories for the family home: "I didn't realise at the time how lucky I was to be exposed to a range of tools at a young age, and I don't recall even using the shop much while I was growing up, but I'm sure there were many times that I was drafted into being a shop helper."

As his interest in furniture making developed, Craig began to explore the business side of his furniture making in an attempt to generate enough work to make it a full-time profession, and within a few years he had developed enough side work building furniture that he decided to make the leap to go full-time: "Luckily I had been able to convert a nice

two-car garage into a decent workshop to start my new career," he recalls. He expanded his workshop numerous times over the next 10 years before moving into a larger, more industrial shop space close to home. As Craig explains, "I am essentially self-taught minus a few week-long seminars on marquetry."

Learning from the experts

But Craig wasn't satisfied with just making ordinary pieces of furniture – he wanted to elevate his pieces to the next level and incorporate a number of inlay and marquetry techniques, which would not only make his work stand out from the crowd but also help to showcase his skills. After all, in such a competitive marketplace, you need to make

your pieces stand out. So this furniture maker set out to undertake training in classical marquetry, where he studied with Paul Schurch and Patrick Edwards, both modern masters of the medium. He undertook a week-long class with each, which he found was enough to get a decent jump start on some marquetry skills. As Craig tells us: "My marquetry work developed slowly over a few years after taking those classes. I built a number of speculation pieces to increase my skill level and those were well enough received so as to generate a few additional marquetry pieces." Craig explains that things sort of snowballed from there with new pieces generating clients for more new pieces. "There was no real plan to fuse marquetry and furniture beyond the desire to continue creating new work in both mediums," he tells us.

Today, Craig loves to incorporate luxurious materials into his pieces, including a variety of precious and semi-precious stones, such as opals and ammolites. He tells us that he uses such materials as they have brilliant sparkle that grabs attention, and they do this in spades. In fact, Craig has won numerous best of show awards but winning the grand prize in



'Harlequin Diamond Cabinet',
made using jatoba, madrone burl,
quartersawn maple and quartersawn sapele



The Editor's favourite piece: opal and ebony inlaid dining table. Just look at the detail on that leg – please can I have this in my dining room?!

the Veneer Tech Craftsman's Challenge really attests to this furniture maker's immense skill.

Besides the other materials he incorporates into his pieces, we cannot overlook the actual timber he uses, as each piece is chosen for its wonderful texture and grain patterns – something which Craig clearly has an eye for. Mahogany is used for much of his work and unsurprisingly is his favoured timber to incorporate. Aside from its wonderful texture and grain, it also makes for an ideal frame around decorative veneered panels.

Pushing the envelope

Going back to the beginning and trying to ascertain where Craig took his inspiration from, he explains that he looks to the great James Krenov and Jacques Emile Ruhlmann, both of whom have had strong influences on his work: "Krenov's work had such precise detail and grain selection and I attempt to have both precision in my joinery and harmonious grain orientation in all my furniture." Similarly, he says that Ruhlmann is a fantastic example of taking furniture to an extreme, with the most precious materials and endless labour used to create furniture of supreme quality: "That is something I strive for daily in my work; I want each piece that leaves my shop to be better, more precise and more unified than the previous piece." Craig explains that he has no desire to simply stop innovating and make work of mediocre quality just because a client will pay for it; he wants his work to excel in every way possible and that is what keeps him going. Making average, mundane furniture holds no interest for him. Here is a furniture maker who strives for the very best, and it shows in each and every piece he makes.

Profile



This wonderful chess table is made in the Art Deco theme using walnut, walnut burl, holly, gaboon ebony and maple



This ornate desk and chair is made using cherry, carpathian elm burl Macassar ebony, gaboon ebony, maple, and various marquetry woods

So how would Craig describe his furniture making style if asked? Well, ask I did and putting my preconceived notions aside, he confirms my suspicions of an Asian/Arts & Crafts blend: "It has the clean lines of more modern Arts & Crafts work with subtle curves added for interest." He adds that much of his work also falls directly into the traditional Art Deco realm, again, something that for me was immediately apparent, and I love it. He also comments that his interest in David Roentgen's work from the 18th century has also been a great source of wonder for him: "I find it simply amazing that they were able to create furniture so complex with so little technology. I have just completed a simplified Roentgen-inspired

cabinet and it amazes me even more having now built a mechanical moving piece of furniture that they could do so much more without McMaster Carr, the internet and CNC technology."

Commissioning

I wanted to discover more about the commissioning and design process Craig uses so asked whether he prefers working to a brief or his own design? Well, Craig prefers to build commissions for clients as he finds that fulfilling their needs has allowed him to generate a much wider variety of work than he would have done if left to his own devices. It is clear to see that he has been able to hone his

skills and develop an immense repertoire, thanks to this approach.

In terms of the design process, the majority of his work is client-based commissions where the client has a clear or semi-clear idea of what they are interested in having built. In those cases, it is more of a collaboration between the client and Craig to create a final design that pleases them and is something interesting to him: "Typically, projects start with a meeting at my shop to discuss the overall details of the project and do some initial materials selection. Next, I will do a very basic design to allow me to generate a complete price for the project. If the price is approved and a deposit paid, I then move to a more complete design and use that to create shop drawings where necessary."

For speculative work, he typically builds pieces that take 3-4 days to complete so the complexity is much lower than on client-based

Left: spare room dream: stunning desk and chair made using Honduran mahogany, curly anigre, maple and ebony

Below: Craig also decided to make a matching guest nightstand using the same materials





Craig's workshop, where most of his tools are located. "I have a variety of power tools including an 8ft sliding table saw, 254mm Unisaw, 508mm bandsaw, 406mm bandsaw, 100mm edge sander, 2ft curved edge sander, 330mm planer and a 203mm jointer". There's also a 3hp cyclone dust collector on the left just out of camera shot, plus a drawing area and vacuum table shown on the left



Here you can see the stairway leading up to Craig's veneer loft. He does all his veneer work upstairs and has veneer bundles stored on shelves going up the stairs and all around the loft walls. "I think I've got about 100,000sq. ft plus of various veneer up there now! I have a 20ft long workbench overhanging the main shop area that I use for veneer assembly and marquetry work, which is all done on a DeWalt 508mm scrollsaw"

work. Those pieces are created around materials he has on hand in the shop – frequently materials left over from other projects. The designs are nearly all done on a spur of the moment basis: "I'll look through my materials and come up with a design rather quickly based on what I think might be interesting to build: I don't typically draw these pieces on the computer and rarely make them again. Sometimes they become pieces that sell well and I do end up revisiting the design in the future, although that is rare." The time he spends on a project varies wildly from several days for speculative work to several months for highly complex work, although typically he spends 2-3 weeks on the majority of his pieces.

In terms of the ethos behind his designs, for Craig this is simple: to create work of the highest possible quality and continually strive to make that work better, more complex and more interesting. When I ask him about the piece he's most proud of he mentions his Art Deco chess table (pictured on page 56). This is an original design, which was influenced by traditional Art Deco furniture and utilises a variety of detailing from that period.

Industrial workshop

So where are all these wonderful pieces created? Craig told me that his workshop had changed a fair amount since he started, but I was eager to find out more. He explains that his workshop is a 1,500sq.ft. industrial basement with 13.5ft ceilings and an abundance of light and power. Sounds impressive! He says that this allows him the flexibility to, when the need arises, work day and night on projects of nearly any size from small work, such as jewellery boxes, to furnishing an entire house. In terms of what's in the shop at the moment, I wasn't quite expecting such a list, but at present he's working on a large extending dining table with

matching benches, a small Macassar ebony jewellery box, as well as veneering a dashboard for a 1930s Triumph automobile, and writing an article for *Fine Woodworking* magazine on the virtues of Polyurethane glues. Phew! So as you can see, Craig's a busy man.

Not only is his workshop immense, but it's kitted out with a wide variety of equipment, and Craig's no stranger to tool and machine modification. For example, his shop-made curved edge sander is made from a bench-top belt sander turned 90° and bolted to a wall. He explains: "I placed a curved platen behind the belt and built a table to support my work. I find it is the most useful tool I have and it saves me endless hand sanding and planing of curved edges."


Craig tells me that he uses a mixture of both hand and power methods regularly and finds that whichever tool gets the job done quickly and efficiently is the best tool for the job. He likes dovetails although he almost never cuts them by hand, but he cannot deny that Krenov's dovetails are a thing of beauty.

I asked Craig what he would be doing if he wasn't a furniture maker and he mentions product design, which I suppose is obvious given his engineering background. He says that working in this industry would allow him to make more money and take regular holidays, but I get the impression that this man is doing what he loves, despite the obvious sacrifices he's clearly had to make.

Exploration & refinement

When asked about how he sees the furniture making industry developing, Craig references the recent expansion in the availability of home-sized CNC and laser machines, which in his opinion have made creating much easier for the home shop woodworker: "I think this technology is going to open up the world of

furniture making to a much wider audience. I'm not sure how that will change the market for higher-end professional work, but it will make it easier for people to experiment and create new work."

I was eager to find out about Craig's plans for the future and any new developments he'd be incorporating. I was particularly excited to hear about his plans to carry out more exploration into more complex designs along the Roengten mechanical furniture avenue. Unsurprisingly, he also mentioned the desire to keep pushing his work to higher levels of refinement and he feels there is still much that can be done to continue to improve his work. I'm not sure I necessarily agree with Craig but I cannot wait to see what he produces next. Watch this space and to find out more about the wonderful marquetry and inlay techniques he uses, see page 24. 

Trade secrets

■ **If you're interested in pursuing a career in furniture making, I highly recommend getting some formal training in the subject.** For a very long time I had intended to enrol at the College of the Redwoods and study under James Krenov, but unfortunately that ended up taking a back seat to making a living and I just moved on being self-taught.

■ **Buy the best tools you can afford.** Cheap tools aren't worth the money you pay for them and good tools will last a long time. I have become a great fan of Festool products. I don't like everything they build but certain tools, like the Domino and Rotex sander, are fantastic and make furniture making faster and easier.

To see more of Craig's wonderful pieces, visit his website: www.ctfinefurniture.com



▲ Pic.1 Even with only one shoe on, my eight-month-old grand-daughter Vesper commands (and demands) attention. The finished chair has had outward-facing feet added to the back legs to increase stability, and turned push-fit caps added to the waist-level supporting bolts to improve appearance

Somewhere to sit

Tony 'Bodger' Scott
makes a high-chair
for his grand-daughter



▲ Pic. 2 Bandsawing the curved seat-back was easier than steam-bending it. The better of the two pieces was ripped lengthwise to form matching top and bottom rails



▲ Pic. 3 The seat-base was cut from front to back to accommodate a post swivelling on a dowel. The cut followed dark grain markings to hide the glue-line



▲ Pic. 4 I was nervous about relying only on two blocks to hold the seat-back to the base, so reinforced it with a swivelling latch on the back, held by a small turnbuckle



▲ Pic. 5 The main weight of the seat – and baby – is held by a thick beech rod. Two blocks beneath the seat drop over the rod, and secure it with a sturdy turnbuckle

My son and his wife were very clear: they wanted a high-chair for their first child – my granddaughter – and they wanted it to meet five needs. It had to be height-adjustable, so as to cope with her growth; it had to be capable of being folded up, in order to save space; it had to be light, for ease of handling; it had to have a curved back, for the sake of comfort; and it had to have a removable and washable tray 900mm off the floor.

No high-chair design I found met all the requirements, so the only solution was to rethink the problem with a blank sheet of paper. The design I came up with meets all five needs without difficult joints or expensive metal hinges. In fact, there is no metal in it at all except a handful of screws, but it pays a price in terms of complexity of use.

Two ideas underpin the chair's construction: that a triangle remains rigid even if the joints at its corners are not; and that a turnbuckle – a piece of wood swivelling on a screw – is the

simplest way to hold together parts that need to be dismantled quickly and easily by hand.

Back

I began by cutting the top and bottom rails of the curved back from a single old fence-post of 75 × 100mm pine (Pic. 2). Bandsawing the curve was much simpler than trying to steam-bend a straight piece. It also ensured – once I'd ripped the curved piece along its length – that top and bottom matched. The parents wanted most of the chair to be painted, so there was no point in using a beautiful (and heavier) hardwood.

Routed through-tenons hold the bottom rail to the sides of the seat-back, and a pegged rebate joins the sides to the top, with lengths of 8mm dowel filling the space between. No screws, just glue.

The seat-base, made of stronger sweet chestnut, needed some foldable way to support the front of the tray (and stop the baby from sliding out of the seat). The solution I chose

was to shape the seat-base, cut it in half from front to back, fit an L-shaped post on to a dowel, then glue the two halves of the seat back together around the dowel (Pic. 3).

The hinge also had to be hinged to the back. The hinge formed the first corner of the chair's core triangle, while allowing the two parts to fold as flat as the curved back allowed. Glued and pegged blocks in the seat-base's back corners, pivoting on two long screws, became the basis for this hinge.

Bottom

The size of the seat-base – 300mm side to side, 250mm front to back, and about 175mm back to post – was copied from the standard size of other high-chairs I saw, as was the roughly 150mm gap between seat and tray.

Anxious about the strength of the hinged joint holding the seat-back to the seat-base (babies do bounce around a lot when they get excited,) I reinforced it with a hook-shaped latch (Pic. 4). The latch stops any tendency for



◀ Pic.6 The legs, which fold flat, are braced with thin struts and stop-bars. The struts are held together with halving joints, and pegged and glued to the legs

▲ Pic.7 The bolts supporting the arms of the tray also support the seat-back, forming one of the three corners of the triangle on which the chair's rigidity depends

The heads of the bolts are Araldited into recesses in pieces of the same thick beechwood rod, but the rod pieces are not glued to the legs. Adding the pieces of rod in this way allowed the bolts to serve a second purpose beyond supporting the seat-back; they support the arms of the tray as well (Pic. 7). The bolts' nuts are fixed permanently into wooden blocks glued to the inner face of the seat-back sides.

The triangular design – with two corners attached to the main legs and the third corner hanging free – means that adjusting the chair's height is relatively simple. It involves only taking out the two bolts and the beechwood rod. The whole chair can then be moved one or more holes down the legs. On my chair, the holes are set 50mm apart, but it would be easy to drill more holes to extend the chair's height range or create an intermediate setting.

Arms

The tray is a panel of sweet chestnut – sealed with several coats of gloss varnish to make it easy to wipe clean – set in a grooved pine frame a little wider than the chair's main legs. The frame is made from the same light shelving as the legs. The sides of the frame extend into two arms. The ends of the arms – rounded on a scrollsaw and drilled to fit the dowel – are sliced in half to form two more turnbuckles, so that the tray can be lifted off for washing.

With the back of the tray held firmly on its arms, I had only one remaining problem: how to secure the front of the tray to the supporting post, so that my grand-daughter couldn't, in a moment of sheer excitement, kick the front of the tray up and send her dinner flying across the kitchen.

The solution, again, was a turnbuckle. Quite by chance, the front of the tray needed lifting about 15mm to make it parallel to the seat-base. So I made a block of that depth, sized to fit the top of the post and surrounded on the three inward sides by a low wall to keep the post in position (Pic. 8). The post can't move in the fourth direction because of the stop below the seat-base (Pic. 9).

Before screwing the block into place under

the seat to fold up while in use, and a small turnbuckle on the seat-base keeps the latch in position.

To take the weight of the seat and lock the second corner of my triangle, I fitted a thick beechwood rod between the legs. The rod was positioned so that the top of the seat was a little over 725mm off the ground when the legs were opened up. Allowing for the 150mm gap above the seat, and a tray frame about 25mm deep, that put the top of the tray at the right 900mm height.

Two blocks either side of the rod stop the seat sliding forwards or backwards in use, and another turnbuckle stops the seat lifting out of position accidentally (Pic. 5). The rod is held – unglued – with two screws through the legs, so that it and the seat can be lowered as my grand-daughter grows.

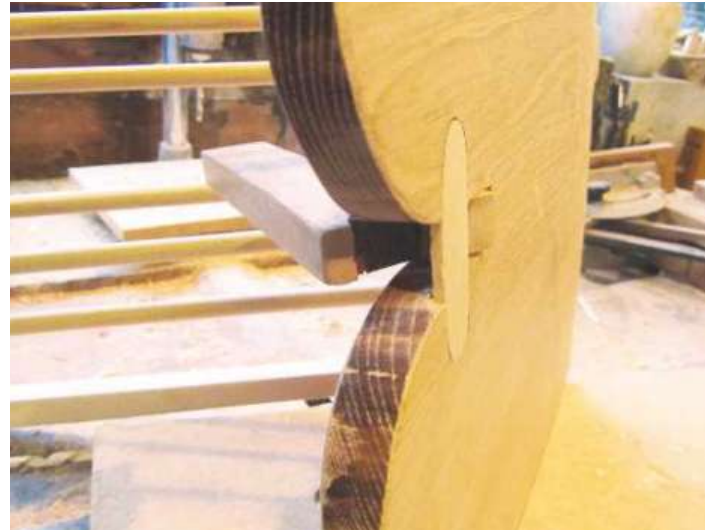
Legs

The chair's folding legs are merely four pieces of pine shelving. The inner main legs are about 75mm wide, the outer support legs 50mm. Each pair is cross-braced to stop racking, and the two pairs swivel on 8mm dowels, which are glued into the support legs but not the main legs (Pic. 6). A horizontal stop-bar screwed and glued to the top of the support legs (I added a second stop-bar later, attached to the main legs) provides more rigidity and prevents the legs from splaying too far.

The third corner of my triangle became two bolts fitted through holes in the legs into the sides of the seat-back. The bolts' position was established by holding the assembled seat in place with the aid of a spirit-level. And once the bolt-holes were marked, it was easy to judge where to trim off the top of the main legs.



▲ Pic.8 A turnbuckle locks the tray's support post into place. The right-hand wall of the housing above extends enough to stop the turnbuckle swivelling too far



▲ Pic.9 The post supporting the tray was prevented from swivelling beyond the vertical by gluing a slim pine stop into a routed recess on the underside of the seat



▲ Pic.10 A flat-bladed screwdriver and a few minutes is all that's needed to undo the bolt and screw on each side and move the seat to a different pair of holes

the tray, I bandsawed out a 6mm notch on its open side to fit the L-shaped turnbuckle attached to the post, and I slightly rounded off the top of the turnbuckle so that the corners wouldn't foul the tray when it was swivelled into position (Pic. 10).

The final touch was to rout my granddaughter's name into the back of the painted seat (Pic. 11). I made myself a template by printing off her name on a piece of paper and lightly gluing the paper to the wood. If you print the word or words you want in a typeface called Arial Rounded (which comes with most versions of Microsoft Word), a shallowly set V-shaped cutter will match the type almost exactly and is easy to manage freehand. You can then paint the routed trench in any contrasting colour. [GTV](#)

► Pic.11 Sloppy measuring meant I had to lose an eighth dowel in the back. I'm planning to label the rest as days of the week – and claim it was all a cunning plan





This chair is being laboriously and carefully cleaned to preserve the patina using an organic specialised wood stripper

The Ébénistes

Barrie Scott visits the workshop of French cabinetmakers **Vladimir and Isabelle Souchko** who are helping to preserve antique woodwork for future generations, by drawing upon age old traditions and practices



This striking piece is 17th century Portuguese and the family crest is engraved on the lock-plate. It is mostly ebony inlaid with ivory



A challenging Louis XV piece. The panel curves on two planes and the framing takes off on another

The workshop of French cabinetmakers Vladimir and Isabelle Souchko, in Rouen, France is small, crowded and dusty – probably like many of our own.

But blow off the dust, clear a space and among the racks of old timber emerge gems of some of the finest furniture to be seen.

There is violetwood, ebony, pallisander, apple and olive veneers, inlaid with ivory and tortoiseshell, contrasting marquetry finishes on elegant furniture that may curve in two planes, with shaped drawer-fronts arranged into geometric designs; finely fitted doors to hide tiny drawers crafted just to hold the jewels of nobility.

The Souchkos are craftspeople known in France as ‘Ébénistes’ – once it meant those who work with ebony and the precious woods. ‘Ebonists’ was the equivalent term once used in English. Their business is specialising in the restoration of regency furniture, particularly 18th-century Louis XV/XVI; possibly the most ornate and extravagant style ever.

A brief history

History tells us that the last kings and aristocrats of France, in the 18th century, were an indulgent bunch (before they started losing their heads) wishing to live among the finest of craftsmanship and ornamentation. This created a rich market for the most highly skilled cabinetmakers from across Europe who were drawn to Paris, at that time considered worldwide to be at the peak of taste and design. It provided craftsmen with opportunities to have a real go at the finest, most expensive of work, elevating woodwork to an artform. An 18th-century Ébéniste could also become wealthy and famous.

The style, you might say, is the complete opposite of the clean lines of Shaker furniture. Would the look suit my front room? Hard to say but getting to basics, some of the techniques involved with the veneering and marquetry on compound curves exhibit rare skills.

Vladimir tells me that getting the timbers for repairs is the number one challenge. The various types of rosewood and mahogany for the carcass work are much in demand and the countries where they grow now closely restrict their export. This type of work, however, mostly needs old wood, suitably faded and aged. Procuring it requires hunting through antique markets for broken pieces and carefully hoarding the tiniest of scraps for repairs. I am advised that www.george-veneers.com is a good source of veneers, not least for identification of wood grain. There are also a variety of moulded brassware features in this furniture: handles, hinges and kick-plates for the legs sometimes procurable at antique fairs, otherwise specialists in Paris will reproduce them by taking moulds from existing samples.

Marquetry

Many of the structural repairs are basic joinery: scarf joint and inlay repairs but the skill for which the Ébénistes are particularly sought is



A later Art Deco piece



Antique brassware



There were surprisingly few tools in use. Vladimir favours this quality Sheffield Clifton shoulder plane



The Hegner scrollsaw is precise enough to trust with pricey veneers



The Souchko workshop

the marquetry. I was lucky enough to see some restoration of this in progress. The adhesives were then and are now animal, horsehide and fish glues, heated in the double pot. The samples before us had lasted a couple of centuries!

When, however, it does come unstuck through damp or modern problems, such as central heating, the repairs can be exacting and delicate. Damaged veneers are removed using a simple electric iron to melt the glue. More stubborn pieces can be persuaded off using a syringe of hot water judiciously injected behind the glue joint. This is the great advantage of animal glues; pieces can come apart cleanly without damage to the surfaces.

A pattern is then traced onto paper and the pieces cut to size, nowadays using a quality electric scrollsaw. The components of the pattern, having been offered up to the furniture for fine adjustment, are glued face down onto the pattern paper, which is in turn reinforced with masking tape. The glue is applied, the veneer placed and work begins with the veneer hammer to drive out air and excess glue, in this case one with a hefty solid steel head. The patch is clamped in place and dries within hours to a workable finish. They proceed to work it with a cloth, alcohol and something they call 'ponse' powder to work the glue residue away, smooth the finish and fine-fill any gaps. I can't find any references to this product, but it may be a type of wood flour.

The old Ébéniste shops, Vladimir told me, would allocate the stages of marquetry production to different teams. One would

specialise in the marking out, another cut the veneers, another would glue and clamp and a finisher do the initial cleaning up. These roles were strictly regulated by the Guilds of the time. Curiously, after the revolution traditions were challenged, cabinetmakers could try different roles, employing new techniques – a freedom which marked the beginning of a change in the design of French furniture.

Learning by experience

A large part of the restoration work is the sympathetic cleaning of surfaces. There is a balance to be struck between exposing the colours of the timber and not destroying the 'patina': the build up of layers of polish made shiny and smooth with the touch of hands over the years. They begin with soap and water then work away with an organic specialised stripper.

Vladimir took pleasure in pointing out the names of the master Ébénistes found

somewhere stamped in the carcass when dismantled. There was a Shmitz, and a Louis Majorelle who apparently worked for the king. Their names endure like famous painters. There is also a satisfaction, as with any repair or restoration, with engaging with the work of someone many years before, enjoying the techniques and sometimes observing shortcuts and mistakes!

On enquiry about their training in these skills, the Souchkos told me they are what in France they proudly call 'Auto Didacts'. They are self-taught. Some of us who sweated through time-served apprenticeships might judge this in a negative way, although we all finally become and remain 'auto didacts' – learning by experience. Clearly, though, their clients have quite sufficient confidence in their reputation to entrust them with pieces of furniture of such quality that they are unlikely to ever be reproduced. [GW]



Always worth a little industrial espionage to see what the experts use!



A Macassar ebony and pearwood piece of marquetry work ready to be glued in place

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Forsa 9.0 - P3	Professional	Inc Professional STC + TWE + TLE + Scorer	6.5 / 1.0 / 415v	107 mm x 3.2 m	£4,800.00	£5,760.00

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Letters

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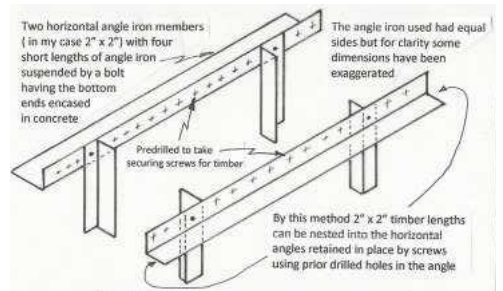
The garden shed – an alternative approach



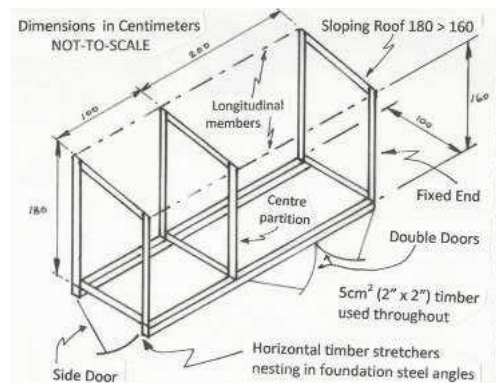
LETTER OF THE MONTH

The completed shed in its new livery – courtesy of Cuprinol

It goes without saying that a firm foundation is essential – here you can see the method Bernard applied



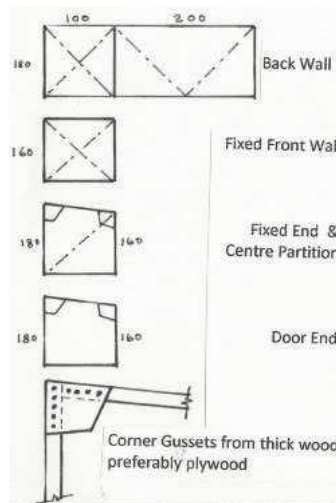
A view of the basic construction principles



I thought fellow readers may be interested to hear how I went about making my garden shed, which measures 1.6m high at the front and 1.8m at the back. The plan view comprises three 1m.sq. modules – the whole of the floor area is free for storage and all the wooden walls will take nails/screws and/or shelves without needing physical access. Two modules have a double door at the front and the other module from the side.

Firstly, four pieces of angle iron uprights are set in concrete. Prior to this, two load-bearing angle iron horizontal cross members are bolted to these uprights. I used angle iron but heavy timbers would be fine. In effect, the two cross members are bolted to the uprights and are chocked in position to allow the concrete to be poured.

The 3m back wall is stiffened by cross braces and the fixed wall at the front has cross braces. The fixed end is braced with a strut, with the corners having thick battens



The bracing details

Fixing the end with bracing and corner gussets





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screwed to its frame and the brace itself to give a rigid construction.

Once the goalposts have set in the concrete, a horizontal timber is nested in the support angle secured by screws via pre-drilled holes in the angle. Cross members can be fitted at floor level before the three braced items are positioned. The back wall bracings are fitted at roof level so that the back wall and three frames are stable, followed by bracing the short front wall. A horizontal member running along the roof at the front stretching along the top of the short front wall and across the double door opening is next to be fitted.

This sets out the principles of the construction; I leave details of flooring, doors and roofing to the discretion of the reader.

Bernard Smith, by letter

Bernard, thanks so much for sharing such a detailed description of your shed build with us. Due to limited space we couldn't print it all, but visit the website to see the letter in full. It goes to show how you can make better use of space by just thinking a little outside the box!

Tegan Foley

WRITE & WIN!

We always love hearing about your projects, ideas, hints and tips, and/or like to receive feedback about GW's features, so do drop us a line – you never know, you might win our great Letter of the Month prize, currently a Trend Snappy Colour Ring bit set. Write to the address on the left for a chance to enhance your marking capability with this versatile workshop aid.



Wormed timber turned into luxury cabinet

Speaking of his latest piece, the 'Lyctus' cabinet, Bertram Whitford tells us this idea came about after discovering that the lyctus beetle had bored its way through some boards of London plane he had stored. The holes it left were riddled in the sapwood of every board so he decided to highlight the path of the beetle by planing the timber down to reveal the horizontal pathways. These were then filled with liquid copper paint (not before thoroughly treating the timber against further infestation), to complement the copper rod supports.

Bertram comments that he enjoys using, designing and making tambours, and in this instance, ash was used as a substrate and aspen veneer was applied on the face side. Another feature incorporated into the design was for the tambour to be partly visible as it travelled up and away. This was achieved by lifting the 'hat' of the piece up on the copper supports, a feature replicated at the bottom of the carcass for continuity.

The rails that the shelves tenon through had angled mortises cut into them, which was achieved by making an angled jig for the rails to sit on while being cut. This is an operation that calls for, usually more than one, test piece to ensure the correct angle is set



With the tambour open, you can view your (hopefully) extensive drinks collection!

to receive the through tenons. Finally, the copper pull, or 'lift', had to be created to allow for smooth operation of the tambour. Blessed with a concave dip in the bottom of the frame, a copper lip set into the tambour mirrored the form of the live edge of the London plane, and created an inviting interstice for the hand to explore. To see more of Bertram's wonderful work, visit www.bertramwhitford.com.

This fantastic piece shows an ingenious way of exploiting the tracks left by unwanted guests! It's a triumph – thank you, Bertram for sharing it with us. GW in conversation with Bertram Whitford – designer and maker



The beetles' tracks were filled with copper paint

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Around the House

with Phil Davy



Have you ever noticed how supermarket parking spaces seem to be getting narrower? It's

probably my age, or maybe I'm putting on weight... There's a similar problem in my workshop, which is getting more cramped each time I enter. Most woodworkers are reluctant to part with the smallest offcut, especially if decent timber. They may well come in useful one day, but when this leads to cluttering up a small workshop, maybe it's time to reconsider. Perhaps it would help to restrict ourselves to just one shelf or storage box for offcuts, with any surplus destined for the woodburner?

Phil Davy

Phil Davy, Consultant Editor

Book review

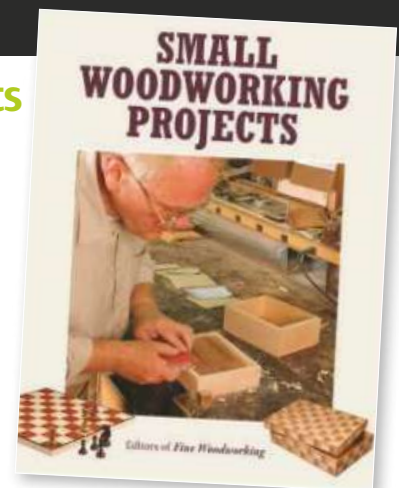
Small Woodworking Projects

Editors of Fine Woodworking

Small workshops generally demand small projects, so with Christmas on the horizon there are a few in this book that would be ideal to tackle for gifts. They vary in complexity, from a simple chess board to an elaborate Pennsylvania spice box with hidden compartments. In fact, about a quarter of the projects are small boxes, with elegant designs and useful sections discussing methods for interiors and achieving an Arts & Crafts finish. Tool projects include a carver's mallet, chisel handles plus some neat wooden planes.

Furniture maestro Christian Becksvoort has designed an unusual freestanding display frame with an Arts & Crafts flavour. Pegged tenons mean it can be dismantled. His two unusual lamps from maple veneer rings are classy but look fairly straightforward to build.

Another picture frame with a Greene & Greene flavour has a delightful cloud-effect top rail, though using gorgeous timbers such as figured cherry undoubtedly helps in the photos, which are excellent throughout. Likewise, drawings are first rate, though dimensions are Imperial only and there are no cutting lists. A clever use of bandsawn and



routed templates makes a dramatic inlaid chopping board a bit of a challenge, but it's a great project if you're keen to explore routing techniques.

I seem to mention it with almost every American book review, but some of the table saw techniques shown here are horrendous... Leave these aside and it's a fine book, though, with around 20 inspiring projects.

★★★★★

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Q&A

Cutting the kerf

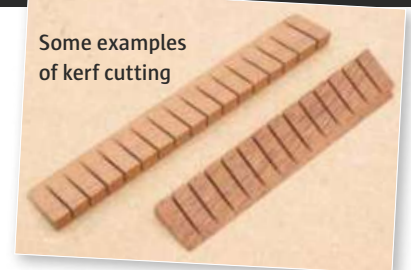
Q I'm thinking about building an acoustic guitar from scratch – can you tell me what is the best way to bend the linings around the top and bottom of the sides?

E Brown, Newcastle

A Linings increase the gluing area for the top and back of an instrument. As most guitars have decorative purfling around their edges, linings also provide strength where edges will be cut away when routing the necessary rebates.

Plane your timber to size first, slightly longer than the guitar rib (side). Although tricky without a planer/thicknesser, if planing by hand make the pieces shorter; they can be

Some examples of kerf cutting



butted together when gluing. The easiest way to bend linings is by cutting kerfs on the bandsaw. Stack two lengths and tape together, then feed them into the blade, in effect cutting a series of deep notches. Don't cut all the way through; you should be able to bend a lining easily without it snapping. Experiment on scrap timber first!



Autumn project

Takes: **Couple of weekends**

DISPLAY SHELVES

An awkward commission!

Tools you'll need
Biscuit jointer,
mitre saw, router,
sander & drill

Phil Davy tackles these challenging horizontal shelves, made using Douglas fir

 Sometimes we get commissioned to build something rather unusual, which would not necessarily be to our taste. A friend recently asked me to build some display shelving, which seemed simple enough. Horizontal shelves would be varying lengths, though, along with offset vertical supports. These components would include large diameter circles sawn or routed as decoration. Not my choice, you understand. A cut-out on the top board would enable a piece of 6mm toughened glass to be inserted, with a downlight above this to highlight particular items on display. It was all beginning to sound less straightforward...

Mike wanted timber with an interesting grain, though because of the size of the structure and weight of items to be displayed, we decided against hardwood. Reasonably lightweight, Douglas fir is easy to work and often you can get long, wide boards free from knots. Also known as Columbian or Oregon pine, it has a wonderful aroma when cutting, reminding me of trips long ago to forested American national parks. It's easier on planer knives than many timbers, too, though you have to watch out for splintering. It does dent fairly easily, although nothing like as badly as Western red cedar. Along with Western red cedar, it's probably my favourite softwood.

Glue-up


With shelf depth finishing at 235mm, it was necessary to glue boards together to get sufficient depth. Biscuits helped here, more for alignment than strength. Horizontal and vertical boards were also jointed with biscuits, though you could use pocket screws if you're happy to fill the exposed holes. Alternatively, you could rout housings for the shorter vertical pieces to sit in. You could then counterbore



and screw down through each shelf, making an exceptionally strong joint.

I set vertical end pieces back 5mm from the front edge of the shelving, which looks better than having all edges completely flush. The cut-outs are pretty straightforward to make with a bearing-guided flush trim router bit. Make a simple template from 6mm MDF, though it's worth spending time getting this

as neat as possible, with a uniform curve. If not, any nick or defect will be replicated when you come to rout the actual timber.

Of course, nothing but a clear finish would do for such dramatic grain. I applied a few coats of Rustins' clear matt polyurethane varnish. This really does give a dead flat finish, though a satin varnish would really enhance the pattern further. 



1 First, plane all timber to about 20mm. Boards will be thickened again after gluing together



2 If you don't have a surface planer, true up the edges of the boards to be glued with your longest bench plane



3 Mark out positions for biscuits, avoiding decorative cut-outs. Cut slots for No.20 biscuits with a jointer



4 Glue the boards together to create sufficient width. Cramp for a couple of hours, checking timber is flat



5 Remove dried glue and thickness boards to 18mm. You can then measure and saw boards to length



6 To remove any saw marks, trim the board ends dead square with a bench plane and shooting board



7 Mark out positions of No.20 biscuits on all boards. Test blade setting on offcuts, then cut slots in the ends



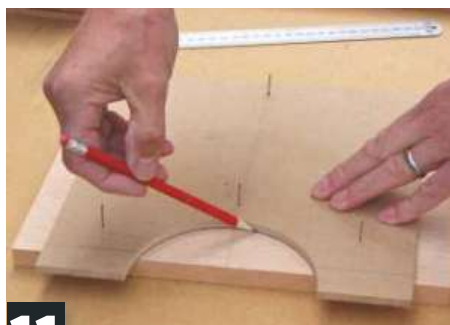
8 With a guide clamp or batten across boards, cut slots in the shelves. You may need extra support for your jointer



9 End sections are not in-line but staggered. Determine the amount of offset by eye or measure the overhang



10 It's easier to sand (150 grit) surfaces of timber before assembly. Round off the front corners of the shelves



11 Front edges feature decorative semi-circular cut-outs. Next, mark out and make a template from 6mm MDF

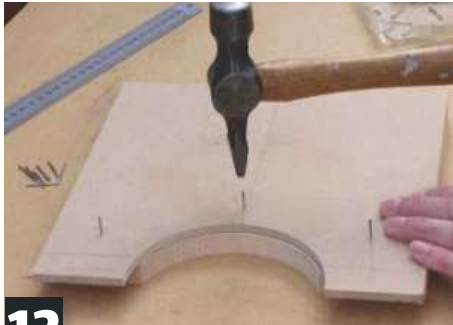


12 Clean up the template neatly and transfer outline, then cut curves using a jigsaw, with 2mm over the waste side of the line



Takes: **Couple of weekends**

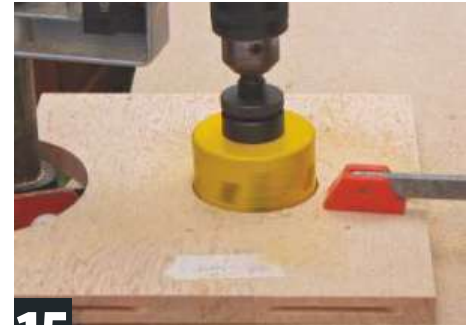
DISPLAY SHELVES



13 Position and fix the template to each end section. Use either panel pins or double-sided tape here



14 Cut-outs are completed by routing carefully with a $\frac{3}{8}$ in Axcaliber bearing-guided flush trim bit



15 Further decoration on end sections is straightforward using a 70mm hole saw mounted in a drill stand



16 If necessary, lightly clean up the sawn edges of the circles with a smaller diameter sanding drum



17 Remove arrises from all exposed front edges with the aid of a bearing-guided chamfer bit in the router



18 Assemble shelves and end sections dry to check slots are correctly spaced. Glue biscuits into the first shelf



19 Glue together one pair of shelves and clamp. Allow to dry before assembling the remaining components



20 Rip timber to width for support battens, then plane the edges. These finish at about 40mm wide



21 Saw battens to length and cut slots for the biscuits. Glue the edges and clamp to the underside of the shelves



22 Mark out the position for the glass panel on the top shelf. Cut with a jigsaw and clean up the edges with a router



23 Rout a rebate around the cut-out to accommodate 6mm-thick glass. This will sit on a bed of silicone



24 True up the rear edges with a bench plane. Fill any defects in the timber, then sand. Finish with polyurethane varnish

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Out & about: Treefest 2015

Treefest extravaganza!



You know autumn is just around the corner when August bank holiday weekend strikes, especially when the weather demands wellies rather than sunnies. Still, that didn't deter hoards of visitors to Westonbirt Arboretum for the annual Treefest extravaganza.

Whisky Barrel Rockers

Rustic furniture from surplus oak barrels is hardly front page news, but the rocking seats and garden tables from Scottish exhibitor Whisky Barrel Rockers were certainly striking and pretty comfortable. Some barrels were originally charcoaled on the inside, leading to some funky designs. See www.whiskybarrelrockers.co.uk.



Whisky Barrel Rockers turn surplus oak barrels into rocking seats



Realistic and full-size, who wouldn't want one of these marvellous teak horses in their garden?



This rustic low table features a slab of suspended natural-edge timber

combining traditional drawing techniques with laser technology. Drawing trees digitally on his tablet, these images are then laser etched onto birch ply, or laser engraved onto oak-veneered MDF. Thomas is producing limited runs of this artwork, most of which are based on trees growing close to his Powys home. See www.thomasperceval.co.uk.

Horses in teak

Made in Indonesia from teak, these beautiful horses were almost full-size and would look fantastic in any garden. Teak is one of the most durable exterior timbers, so these creations would no doubt last longer than their driftwood equivalents. See www.frysteakgarden.co.uk.



These digitally drawn trees are laser etched onto birch ply, or laser engraved onto oak-veneered MDF to create these stunning effects

Learn chairmaking from a master

It's always good to catch up with long-time GW stalwart Paul Hayden. His six-day outdoor chairmaking courses at Westonbirt are incredibly popular and attract students from around the country. To find out more, see www.greenwoodcourses.com.


Creating suspense

On a smaller scale was the furniture of Welsh craftsman David Hoskin. Contrast rustic, natural-edge timber with straight, machined ash or oak, and they blend together nicely. His low table featuring a slab of oak suspended in a tubular steel framework was particularly noteworthy. See www.davidhoskin.co.uk.

Tree-inspired art

Some of the most dramatic tree-inspired art I've seen was produced by Thomas Perceval,

Effortless sawing

Even for those who can't distinguish oak from larch, sawing trees into boards is always fascinating stuff, with Treefest regulars Denis Brown drawing a big crowd. Providing power was Burrell steam engine Diamond Queen, with a belt-driven vintage Stenner circular saw slicing up logs effortlessly. Entertaining to watch and certainly far quieter than some of the more contemporary methods of timber conversion most of us are used to... 

Useful kit: Ryobi R18 Hybrid 18V area light

Bright spark



Power tool manufacturer Ryobi is renowned for its innovative design features, and the new area light is no exception.

With a strong presence in garden machinery and kit besides power tools, it's hardly surprising that elements transfer across to workshop or site equipment and vice versa. Hybrid lawnmowers are an important part of Ryobi's line-up, where a 36V (two 18V batteries) cordless machine can also be plugged into a mains supply if necessary. Great news if you only have one or two batteries but can't quite manage to cut the lawn without running out of juice. But how is this relevant to work lights?

Cordless is better

Hybrid technology can be found in their new area light, powered by either an 18V battery or a 240V AC supply. On the downside no mains cable is supplied, which is slightly frustrating as the connector is a two-pin Euro pattern (known as a Schuko socket). Unless you already own a Ryobi Hybrid lawnmower you could be stuck, as I've discovered suitable adaptor cables are tricky to track down. You can actually get a 1m adaptor lead made for around £18 including delivery (www.leadirect.co.uk). Probably better to just accept that the area light is a cordless unit and forget the mains supply for now!

Powerful output

At 2,000 lumens the 25W LED lamp provides the most powerful output I've come across in a cordless lamp or torch. No battery or charger is included here, so you'll need to buy into Ryobi's cordless One+ 18V system, but that's certainly no bad thing...

The LED lamp can be rotated through 360° and is stable at whatever angle it's set to. You can stand it on the floor or bench, suspend it from a wire fence or ladder, or just hang it up with a hook that can be unfolded. Battery or mains plug is inserted at the rear, while the light is activated with a single push button.

Long-lasting beam

The beam is useable for about 8m and fitted with a fully charged 1.5Ah battery, my unit ran for 70 minutes, while a 4.0Ah pack provided light for 210 minutes. Remember that with Li-ion cells you won't get a gradually diminishing beam as the battery runs out. Suddenly it's all or nothing, so to speak. Most of Ryobi's batteries now feature a fuel gauge, so hopefully you won't get left out in the dark.

Conclusion

This would make a great lamp for a shed or workshop with an erratic mains supply, or as bright emergency lighting. It'd be ideal for a house restoration project during the winter months, particularly when the sparky switches off the power at a crucial moment!

★★★★★

Price: £99.99

Web: www.ryobitools.eu



The two-pin Euro pattern connector, or Schuko socket



Ryobi's cordless One+ system is needed here



The thumbscrew allows for stability in use



A single push button activates the light

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Squaring up



Les Thorne takes a square blank of American cherry and turns it into an attractive winged bowl

“Woodturners only make round things,” is a common phrase, and this is something I hope to dispel in this article. When they think of a bowl, the majority of people will imagine a round one, so although the centre part will match their thoughts, the outside is left square. Turning square stock is more dangerous than turning round, so this brings to the fore a few safety considerations. You are going to have to watch your fingers and concentrate throughout the turning. The size of the project will really depend on the stability of your lathe – square timber will obviously be more out of balance than its round counterpart, so picking the timber is important. Don’t use a blank

which is half sapwood and heartwood as this will accentuate problems with vibration. You want to choose a timber that’s not too brittle – I found this out to my cost during the turning of this project so had to think on my feet and changed the design slightly due to the wood letting me down. I would have thought that air-dried would be better than kiln-dried timber.

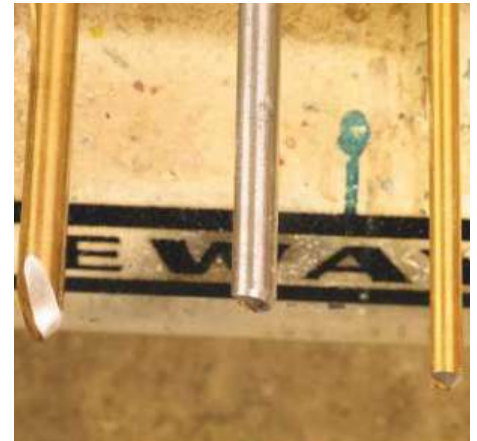
If your lathe has electronic variable, this will help the turning process, as it will allow you to increase the speed so it is rotating as fast as possible. This always makes intermittent cutting much easier. There are many variations of square turned bowl and lots of designs can be found on the internet, but the process of making is similar to that shown here. **GW**



▲ Pic.1 Choose a piece of American cherry or similar, measuring just under 200mm square and cut it dead square. Any curly grain on the corners may cause a problem during the turning – we will have to see



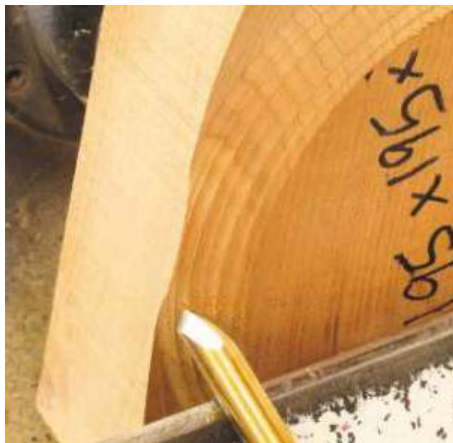
▲ Pic.2 Using a bradawl will allow you to get the best accuracy while marking the centre – this is better than a pencil. A cheap plastic centre finder is perfect for this job



▲ Pic.3 The majority of the turning will be done using just three tools: a 10mm bowl gouge with a long grind, a 6mm bowl gouge with a traditional straight grind and a 10mm gouge with the bevel angled at 60°



▲ Pic.4 Watch those fingers! The lathe speed is set at around 1,000rpm so anything finger-wise that you put over the toolrest is liable to be injured, so be careful!



▲ Pic.5 The shape will need to be worked in two ways, hence the need for the long-grind bowl gouge. Work the tool in from left to right to form the shape on the wings



▲ Pic.6 When you have clearance you can work the bowl shape from the right to the left using the bevel of the tool on the wood; this is just like forming a normal bowl and the secret here is to forget about the square bit



▲ Pic.7 The gouge's angle of presentation is very important. Here I am demonstrating how the bevel is lining up with the direction of the cut



▲ Pic.8 Once you have marked up the size required, forming the chuck holding spigot is a simple matter of just cutting in about 6mm with the parting tool. Using a foot instead of a recess will help with the shape of the bowl



▲ Pic.9 Here's a rough outline of the shape I'm trying to achieve. Drawing the outline gives you an idea of where you're going

Turning



▲ Pic.10 When you draw a thick line (as I have done here) you can see it when the lathe is spinning. The bevel of the tool will need to follow this line around in order to give you the desired shape



▲ Pic.11 Normally I like to do the final shaping of the bowl's exterior using the 6mm bowl gouge, but as I couldn't get the toolrest close enough, I required the strength of a bigger tool



▲ Pic.12 I find it's best to work each shape by doing a bit on one side, followed by a bit on the other. My right hand has to go towards the floor during the cut; this raises the cutting tip and keeps the bevel of the tool in contact with the wood



▲ Pic.13 I have managed to get the toolrest inside the wings, but the problem with this is that I'm going to be working right on the end of the blank. Make sure everything is tight here as if it moves, you'll break the piece



▲ Pic.14 Set the lathe to 1,800rpm for the final finishing cuts. This technique is so much easier at a higher speed, but if you don't feel safe, reduce the speed – this just requires more sanding



▲ Pic.15 There are a variety of designs you could choose for this bowl, such as having the bowl sat on its four corners. Due to the brittleness of the timber, I decided to sit the bowl on the central foot



▲ Pic.16 It's difficult to get a good finish, so I decided to go back to using the 6mm bowl gouge with a light bevel rubbing cut, which will allow you to get a good sandable finish. Vibration did start to become a problem towards the end of the shape



▲ Pic.17 I like to have a sharp punctuation point between the transitions of the shape. To get in this tight spot I changed to my signature gouge, which has a sharper bevel angle of around 40°



▲ Pic.18 I couldn't quite get the correct angle to do the final bit of turning with the gouge, so I changed to a diamond-shaped point tool. You only have one chance at this so be positive



▲ Pic.19 Sanding the bottom of the piece is not easy as you have to consider the safest and most effective place to sand. I found that the majority of this had to be done with the lathe switched off



▲ Pic.20 Next, mount the bowl in the chuck jaws. Mark the diameter of the bowl and position the toolrest so it is straight across the front – this acts as a guard



▲ Pic.21 It's absolutely imperative that you wear personal protection equipment when turning, especially on pieces such as this. Place a firm grip on the tool and make sure your hand is always behind the toolrest



▲ Pic.22 The tool's flute position is critical here: if you have the flute too open and pointing upwards, you run the risk of catching the unsupported right hand cutting edge and breaking the piece. This photo shows the correct orientation



▲ Pic.23 As the piece gets thinner, having too much bevel in contact with the wood will become a problem. Using the smaller bowl gouge in a pull cut will put less pressure on the surface and cause less vibration



▲ Pic.24 DISASTER! As you can see, a piece broke off my bowl but I'm going to blame the brittleness of the timber! Here, you need to think what to do – decreasing the square will remove the overall impact of the piece



▲ Pic.25 Sorted. I made this fault a feature by adding a little texturing on the edge using a pineapple burr and a light burning with a small blow torch. This should create an interesting contrast with the natural wood, and nobody will know!



▲ Pic.26 Approach the hollowing out just as you would when working on a normal bowl. Work the shape down in steps with the majority of the cutting coming from larger to smaller diameter



▲ Pic.27 Adding a little step with a freshly sharpened parting tool will add that little detail that breaks the transition between the upwards curve of the rim and the convex curve into the bowl – good to know!



▲ Pic.28 I like to finish the inside of the bowl in stages. I use the 6mm bowl gouge for all the finishing cuts until the overhang becomes too great and causes vibration



▲ Pic.29 Keeping the bevel in contact with the wood requires the tool to be passed through the wood in this way. Start horizontal and as you go through the shape, raise the tool tip higher, then lower down as you get to the centre



▲ Pic.30 Take the wall thickness down to a fairly even 5mm. Using hour glass callipers will allow you to measure this easily as they basically repeat on the end nearest you the thickness of the bowl



▲ Pic.31 The area of the bowl right in the middle can cause a problem as sometimes you are unable to get your normal bowl gouge in a suitable cutting position. The 60° bevel used here allows me to make small effective cuts



▲ Pic.32 You may find power sanding the interior difficult. I used a cordless drill for safety and this 3 o'clock position kept everything out of the way. Sand the edge with a block with the lathe switched off



▲ Pic.33 The bowl now needs to be remounted to enable you to remove the marks left by the chuck. A dolly made from a piece of wood covered in bubble wrap and secured with masking tape will act as a friction chuck



▲ Pic.34 Mount the bowl between centres with only enough pressure to drive the piece. Make light cuts using a small tool to clean up and shape the foot of the bowl



◀ Pic.35 Remove as much as you can on the lathe and take away the remaining timber using a carving or sanding tool - the Proxxon mini angle grinder with a sanding pad is perfect for this



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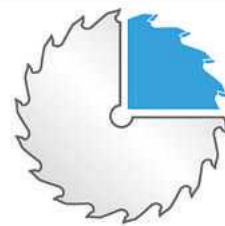
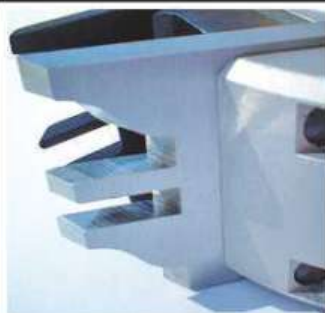
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Michael's musings



App-lication

Michael Huntley shares a few expert tips on achieving the perfect finish

No, this is not a grumbling review of the latest smartphone app that doesn't work; it is a few thoughts about the process of applying the 'perfect finish'. It is all well and good procuring a tin of super-tough-cross-linking chemical resin, but if you don't apply it properly, then you are going to be disappointed. The first tip is to **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS** – in other words, do what it says on the tin. Simple.

Buy quality

Buy a good brush and look after it. The quality of the finish that you achieve will be directly related to the quality and condition of the bristles on your brush. Google 'Gramercy Tools finishing brushes for shellac and lacquer' and you will find out more. It's said that a polisher can work anywhere in the world provided that he has his brushes with him.

Pesky dust

Dust is your enemy. Don't sweep the floor just before you start as it will raise all the dust particles into the atmosphere so that they can gently fall onto your newly applied surface finish. Vacuuming is best, but if you must sweep, leave it an hour or so before you open the tin. Cold and humidity are also bad for finishes. Ideally the workplace needs to be around 20°, so you may have to bring the project indoors, especially in the colder months. Humidity shouldn't really be above 55%. So although those conditions are pleasant for your family, the fumes from the finish might not be. Choose your moment carefully and try to work with the window open so that the fumes disperse. It is a tricky business balancing temperature, ventilation and family.

Timing is key

Timing. This takes us back to the tin. You need to work carefully, which probably means less quickly than someone who is impatiently rushing to get the polishing over and done with. You also have to watch out for runs and thick edges (always have a rag and a spare dry brush handy to gently smooth the finish over), and apply the next coat at the interval that it says on the tin, not at your convenience!

Unwanted visitors

Finally, if an insect lands on your beautiful smooth shiny surface – **IGNORE IT**. Do not try to pick it off; it will get stuck and die. Very sad, but when the polish is dry, then you can pick off the insect and no one except you will know where it had landed. **GW**

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